

A Troublemaker's Handbook

How To Fight Back Where You Work — and Win!

by
Dan La Botz

**A Labor Notes Book
Detroit • 1991**

To Jakob La Botz

In memory of Genora Johnson Dollinger

A Labor Notes Book
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Top: New York hospital workers, members of Local 1199, strike for a decent contract in the summer of 1989. Andrew Lichtenstein/Impact Visuals.

Lower left: Striking Eastern Air Lines flight attendant and Pittston miner's wife welcome Detroit auto workers to the miners' Camp Solidarity. Jim West/Impact Visuals.

Center: Pittston miners read about their plant take-over in the newspaper. Cindy Reiman/Impact Visuals.

Lower right: NYNEX strikers, 1199 hospital workers and Eastern Air Lines strikers marched together in an August 1989 demonstration. Les Stone/Impact Visuals.

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A Troublemaker's Handbook involved conversations and interviews with something like 200 rank and file workers, union officers, staffers, and members of other organizations (civil rights organizations, working women's groups, health and safety coalitions, etc.) in the United States and Canada. It would have been impossible to write this book without the generous help of the many organizations and individuals with whom we spoke. My greatest thanks to all who took the time to speak with me and share their experiences and their expertise. I should specially thank all the activists who were interviewed but whose stories didn't make it into the final draft of the book. In general, when we had several stories that made similar points, we chose the shortest one.

Of course, those who helped by sharing their ideas will not necessarily agree with all of the conclusions we have drawn. Some of the ideas discussed here may be controversial, and we especially appreciate the support of those who do not shy away from controversy. Ultimately, only Labor Notes is responsible for the ideas presented here.

Special thanks go to Mike Konopacki and Gary Huck of Huck-Konopacki Labor Cartoons for contributing their fine cartoons. Many of the photographs in the book come from participants in the events them-

selves, and others were taken by Jim West, who in his spare time is Jim Woodward, editor of *Labor Notes*. Jim painstakingly laid out the entire book. Dave McCullough designed it, as he did our previous three books. Marta Hoetger and Scott Kinberger were speedy proofreaders.

While I am the primary author of this book, several others have also had a hand in it. We are honored to have a Foreword by Genora Johnson Dolinger. Ken Blum wrote Appendix B on Researching Your Employer. Ellis Boal, a Detroit labor attorney who has worked with both Teamsters for a Democratic Union and the New Directions Movement in the UAW, contributed all the legal research and comments you will find in special boxes and in the endnotes throughout the book.

Camille Colatosti of the Labor Notes staff helped with the story of Justice for Janitors in Chapter 18. Phill Kwik wrote about the Pittston miners in Chapters 11 and 22. Kim Moody commented on the draft, contributed substantially to Chapter 13 on Corporate Campaigns, and wrote the first draft of Chapters 1 and 22.

Jane Slaughter helped to shape this book from beginning to end. She revised the entire manuscript, trying to turn my frequently wordy stories into how-we-did-it examples that others could learn from. She chose the Stewards Corners, found the graphics, wrote the appendix on Resources, and throughout the book, when she saw omissions or weaknesses, made calls, conducted interviews and wrote pieces herself to fill the gaps.

I am grateful to the Dick Goldensohn Fund, Inc. for an investigative journalism grant to help support the research and writing of this book.

Finally, thanks to my wife, Sherry Baron, who has given me her support in so many ways.

Dan LaBitz

List of Abbreviations

ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union
ACTWU	Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union
AFSCME	American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
AFT	American Federation of Teachers
ATU	Amalgamated Transit Union
CAW	Canadian Auto Workers
CBTU	Coalition of Black Trade Unionists
CWA	Communications Workers of America
EEOC	Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
HERE	Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union
IAM	International Association of Machinists
IBEW	International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
IBT	International Brotherhood of Teamsters
ILGWU	International Ladies Garment Workers Union
IUE	International Union of Electrical Workers
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NEA	National Education Association
NLRB	National Labor Relations Board
NOW	National Organization for Women
NPMHU	National Postal Mail Handlers Union
OCAW	Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
PATCO	Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization
RWDSU	Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union
SEIU	Service Employees International Union
TWU	Telecommunications Workers Union (Canada)
TWU	Transport Workers Union of America
UAW	United Auto Workers
UE	United Electrical Workers
UFCW	United Food and Commercial Workers
UMWA	United Mine Workers of America
UPIU	United Paperworkers International Union
USW	United Steelworkers
VDT	Video display terminal

For a complete list of the unions which appear in this handbook, see the index.

A Road Map to This Book

This book is an organizing manual. It is meant for workers who want respect and justice from their employers and control over their lives at work. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, this means confrontation with a boss who thinks only bosses need control. So think of this book as a handbook for troublemakers.

We decided to present these tactics by letting the real experts tell their own stories. Rather than a list of rules for organizing, you will find dozens of workers who describe in their own words what worked for them. Many times these stories are inspiring as well as instructive. We think that you will be able to take what you need from each person's or union's experience.

Most of the stories are from workers who are already in unions. But many of the tactics can be used by those who don't have a union, and there are two chapters specifically on non-union situations and on organizing a new union.

This book is not a complete survey of the labor movement in the 1980s, nor a collection of all the important struggles that could have been included. Rather we have chosen examples that clearly illustrated certain tactics and principles of organizing.

Neither is the book a legal rights handbook, although with the help of attorney Ellis Boal we have included some information on your legal rights throughout. You may want to consult your own attorney before trying any of the moves which we have indicated may not be legal.

Use Your Head

Obviously, most tactics will work better in some situations than others, depending on the circumstances of the industry or region or union. It would not be wise simply to copy the strategies described here. We might put a warning label on this book: *Do not use the enclosed tactics without first consulting with your co-workers.*

The 22 chapters deal with a range of topics from shop floor struggles to sitdown strikes. The workplaces

range from factories to offices, from Vancouver to Texas, in the private sector and in the public sector. Because the topics overlap so much, you will find many cross-references to stories in other chapters; the index can also help you find what you want. The book can be read straight through from cover to cover, but individual chapters will also make sense on their own.

Note that we have included a list of abbreviations on the page opposite. This was to avoid tediously spelling out the full names of unions each time.

Steward's Corners

Subscribers to *Labor Notes* will recognize the "Steward's Corners" found at the end of some chapters. Since 1984 *Labor Notes* has run a column about shop floor tactics and local union initiatives which has become one of our most popular features. Steward's Corners should be read as integral parts of their chapters (some have been shortened). The continuing Steward's Corners in *Labor Notes* will act as an ongoing update to *A Troublemaker's Handbook*, so readers would be well advised to take out a subscription.

At the end of each chapter are "Action Questions." These are meant to help you take the ideas in the chapter and apply them to your own situation. The Action Questions are best answered in a group rather than individually, and that group should be the people who will have responsibility for carrying out the answers. There are no correct answers to the questions, but they should stimulate discussion.

You may want to turn to this book from time to time when you are faced with a particular problem, such as an upcoming strike. However, rather than waiting until the problem arises, we recommend that you begin using this book now for group discussion in your workplace. Chapter 21 on Strategic Planning is meant to help get your union into a take-charge gear rather than waiting for management's next move.

Foreword

by Genora Johnson Dollinger

In this book Dan La Botz arms us with a wide range of options for grappling with the problems unions face in this era. We need all of them.

Today, the 13 million-member larger unions sit on treasuries overflowing with dues dollars. They have

buttressed themselves with billion-dollar strike and pension funds, and supplementary funds to protect against layoffs and job dislocations. If finances were the measure, the big established unions would pass muster with flying colors.

But big bank accounts are not enough.

Unions have changed since the feisty days of the 1930s. Many seem arthritic, with recurring symptoms of Alzheimer's. Unable to remember their past, bureaucratic union leaders cannot develop the strategies we need to overcome labor's retreat. Lacking imagination and boldness, they participate in joint programs with the

employers and forget what is fundamental to unionism—that management and labor are on opposing sides.

The odds against labor seem formidable today just as they seemed to us over fifty years ago. But the instincts and talents of workers on the job should never be underestimated. It was a simple strategy devised by a Chevrolet plant worker in 1937 that forced General Motors, the world's largest corporation, to accept—unwillingly—the first United Auto Workers contract.

In 1937, we did not worry about court injunctions that threatened union funds. We didn't have a bountiful treasury that could be wiped out by court order. That some activists today have resurrected the sitdown strike is a good sign. It indicates that at least some union members are seeking out a more aggressive approach.

Women Have a Different Role

Today's workforce differs a great deal from the one on which the CIO was founded. When we organized the Women's Auxiliary and the para-military Women's Emergency Brigade in support of the great General Motors Sitdown Strike in 1937, some of us did work in GM or supplier plants. But most of us were the wives, daughters and sisters of workers in the plants. Women were a much smaller part of the workforce, but by their vital contribution to the winning of that strike they set a shining example for their sisters who followed them into the war plants of World War II.

By contrast, today women—now almost 50% of the labor force—compose the fastest growing sector both of workers and of union membership. But their problems as workers have not been fully incorporated into unions' assumptions. This book shows us how women are organizing in new sectors and putting new bargaining issues on the labor agenda.



Genora Johnson Dollinger.

Genora Johnson Dollinger was the organizer of the Women's Emergency Brigade in Flint, Michigan in 1937. While General Motors workers sat in to demand a union, the women defended the plants from outside, marching and battling the police. Their story is told in the video *With Babies and Banners* (see Appendix E).

Dead End

In 1881, over a hundred years ago, the American Federation of Labor inscribed in its founding program the need for the eight-hour day. A half century later, it was clear that the AFL had reached a dead end. The CIO was the first major advance over the foundations laid by the AFL. It brought about a social revolution in labor-management relations. Our victory in 1937 led to the organization of the basic industries in this country. Sweeping across the country, millions of workers were soon signing union cards.

The insurgent new movement was not only a great economic force; it inevitably spilled over into labor political action. In the industrial states of Pennsylvania, Ohio and Michigan, Labor's Non-Partisan Leagues sprouted up. Labor felt its new-found strength and wanted to elect its own candidates to office.

The alliance of labor with the Democratic Party put a stop to this independent political action. As a consequence, workers today lack a party that represents their interests. Thousands of factories and jobs have been transported to foreign shores, where labor is cheaper and often unorganized. We need *political* answers to stop run-away industries and to win national health care and child care and adequate pensions for all.

Most of the working people in this country agree. The minority who bother to vote identify with neither the Democratic nor the Republican party, but instead usually register as independents. Once again, union leaders lag behind.

Stagnant No More

Over fifty years have passed since the glory days of the CIO. Fifty years is a long time in the life of an organization. The stories in this *Handbook*, told by some of the best rank and file union activists today, increase my confidence that the current stagnation cannot last much longer. In these pages, Dan La Botz has uncovered the great diversity of methods being used by the generation which is trying to shake up the old institutions. They will become our new, forward-looking union leadership.

Today more than ever we need the bigger strategies that Dan points to in his final chapter. But we also need to relearn the basics—to re-create the unions from the bottom up, on the shop floors and in the offices. And we need to rebuild the union as a community institution.

The people whose stories we read in this book are beginning this process. It's up to all of us to help them succeed.

Genora Dollinger

The Fight Starts Here 1.

When you read about unions in the newspapers, what do you read? About the decline of the union movement, about national level bargaining, about the personalities at the heads of unions. What are the topics at union conventions? Speeches by politicians, national legislative goals. The *workplace itself*—the shop floor—the area where we spend eight hours per day—is the one area of union practice which receives scant attention—whether from the media, academics, or often even national union leaders themselves. This chapter explains why we think the workplace is the key to rebuilding the labor movement.

Profound Changes in the Workplace

Since the mid-1970s there has been a tremendous change in the situation of the U.S. labor movement.¹

- The 1974-5 recession brought an end to the 30-year period of relative economic stability in the U.S. economy.

- There was a wave of bankruptcies, mergers, buyouts, and plant closings that cost millions of workers their jobs, many of them union jobs.

- Concessions to Chrysler in 1979, 1980 and 1981 were followed by a wave of employer demands for givebacks. Concessionary bargaining spread throughout the economy in both private industry and the public sector.

- Pattern agreements broke down in the auto, coal, steel, rubber, electrical, copper, airline, trucking, longshore, wood products, paper, and meatpacking industries.

- Ronald Reagan's firing of 11,500 air traffic controllers and the destruction of PATCO in 1981 signaled that the government was solidly in support of the employers' offensive against unions.

- Under Reagan the NLRB and OSHA were

weakened to the point that they became all but useless to workers.

- Employers introduced various "joint" programs such as Quality of Work Life and team concept to undermine unionism. These spread rapidly as they were embraced by many union leaders.

- A series of militant strikes, carried out in the fashion which had become traditional in the 1940s-70s, such as the Phelps-Dodge, Greyhound, and TWA strikes, proved to be ineffective in the 1980s.

- All of these developments combined to reduce the percentage of organized workers to a pre-CIO level of 16 percent.

- At the same time women entered the workforce in ever greater numbers, reaching nearly half of the wage earners in the country. These women workers, however, earned only \$.69 for every dollar a man made.

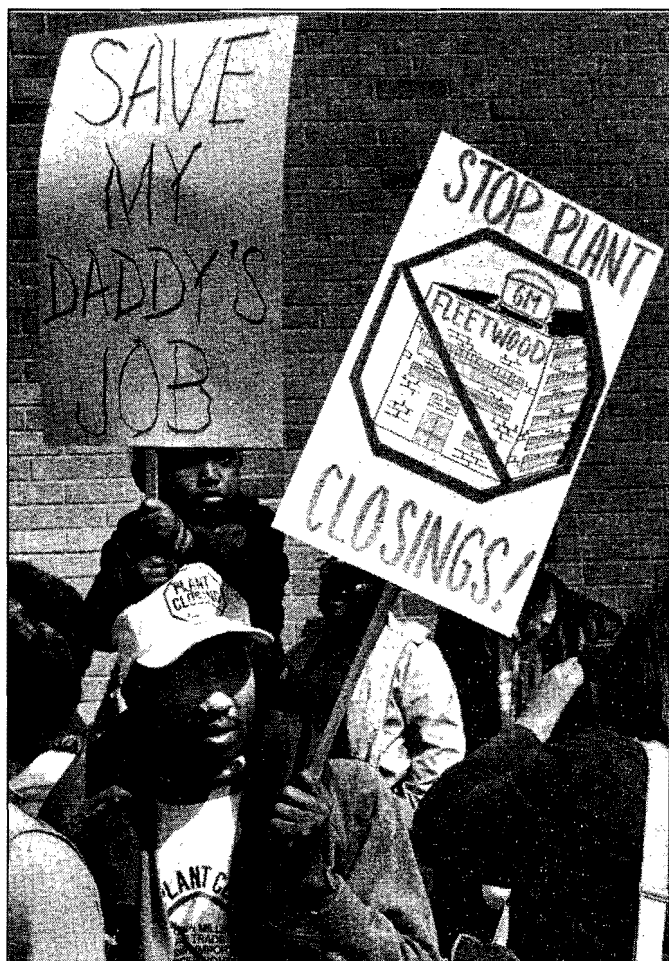
- And in many cities (Boston, New York, Washington, Miami, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco and others), new waves of immigrants from Central America, the Caribbean, and Asia were transforming the ethnic make-up of the workforce in both industrial and service sectors.

Between 1970 and 1990 the U.S. workforce had been dramatically transformed, and so had working conditions and the balance of power between labor and management.

Changes in the World Economy

These developments were really the expression of profound changes taking place in the world economy. During the 1960s and 1970s Japan and Western Europe rose to become major competitors of the United States, ending the post-war domination the United States had achieved. At the same time, several "underdeveloped" nations achieved levels of industrial

development—using low-wage labor—that made them competitive in the capitalist world. Countries such as Hong Kong, Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Mexico and Brazil became attractive sites for production of goods once made in the U.S. By 1975 the United States was merely first among many competitors, and by the late 1980s it was no longer clear that the U.S. was first.



The growth in the productive power of so many developed and underdeveloped countries meant overcapacity on a world scale in industries such as steel, auto, and electronics.

At the same time there were major changes in the size and structure of the world's dominant corporations. These corporations became multinationals, operating in many areas of the globe. For the first time in world history, production was actually being organized on a world scale, with parts produced and assembled in various countries. Capital had become extremely fluid. The rapid movement of capital in the form of money and machines was made possible by technological developments: the automation of the shipping industry, including containerization; the improvement of telecommunications, including satellites, micro-processing and cable optics. The key to it all was the computer.

Technological change also took place in the factory with the introduction of computers and robots on a vast scale. In every area of society from welfare office to poultry plant to grocery checkout, technology

was being used to make everything move along faster and faster. Hundreds of thousands of jobs were eliminated, and the jobs that remained were sped up.

The changes in the world economy had two impacts upon the relationship between employers and workers. First, the increased international competition put pressure on employers to lower their costs. Employers naturally chose labor costs as a prime target. Second, the internationalization of production put the multinational employers in a much stronger position versus their unions.

Pushed by competition, and emboldened by their relatively stronger position, the employers launched an offensive: demands for concessions, the destruction of pattern agreements, and in some cases union busting. To accomplish these aims, they used new strategies or revived old ones: anti-union law firms and consultants; forced strikes and lockouts; scabs.

Collaboration or Resistance?

The new employer militancy which arose in the 1980s led unions to respond in one of two ways: collaboration or resistance. In some unions the dividing line between the two trends was clear. In the Teamsters union, for example, the International leadership under Roy Williams and Jackie Presser attempted to collaborate with the employers. They accepted two-tier wage scales, productivity deals, flexible scheduling and other measures which over the long haul tended to destroy the union's contracts and in some sectors, such as steelhauling, call into question the very existence of the union. The other trend, the resistance trend, was exemplified above all by the Teamsters for a Democratic Union reform group within the union (TDU), which led contract rejection movements in every major Teamster jurisdiction in the late 1980s and campaigned for one member-one vote in elections of top officers. In 1990, the candidacy of Ron Carey for president of the Teamsters provided a rallying point for the resistance trend.

In most unions, however, the resistance trend did not manifest itself as a national internal caucus like TDU or like the New Directions Movement in the United Auto Workers. A handful of unions such as the United Electrical Workers, the American Postal Workers Union, and the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers officially rejected the new cooperative approach. In other unions, the resistance trend manifested itself in particular struggles. In the mid-1980s, those at Hormel and Watsonville Canning stood out. Later in the decade it was shown in the Black-led movement to democratize the Mail Handlers Union and the growth of opposition caucuses in large local unions like Communications Workers Local 1101 at New York Telephone and Transport Workers Local 100 in the New York City Transit Authority.

The resistance trend was visible in the lengthy strikes at Eastern Airlines and Greyhound. It became apparent in the creative tactics employed in the

Oregon State Employees' "rolling strikes," the CWA's NYNEX strike, New York 1199's contract fight, the OCAW's corporate campaign against BASF, and, above all, in the mass mobilization led by the United Mine Workers in the Pittston strike.

The resistance trend was responsible for the development of some inventive workplace strategies and tactics to respond to the new employer offensive. Some of them have become quite famous in the labor movement: the "inside strategy" based on "running the shop backwards"; the "corporate campaign" based on a multidimensional attack on the individuals and institutions supporting a particular corporation. Local P-9's struggle against Hormel gave rise to the Adopt-A-Family idea later used by the BASF workers. The OCAW's victory at BASF showed the potential for alliances with environmentalists. The 1199 Health and Hospital workers showed the importance of labor-community coalitions. The Pittston UMW members turned a strike into a social movement based on civil disobedience. These are some of the struggles and tactics that are profiled in this book.

And these are only the most famous. In scores of other workplaces, workers used their ingenuity and their courage to organize their co-workers and fight to regain control of the workplace.

Why the Workplace?

The problems facing working people are so huge—as described above—and the needed solutions so sweeping, that one might well ask, Why is Labor Notes publishing a book on the small stuff—the shop floor? When working people need everything from plant closing legislation to international solidarity to a new political party, why focus on the everyday and the mundane?

There are several reasons:

1) *We have no choice—the employers have declared the workplace the battleground of the 1990's.* In their drive for competitiveness, employers are out to squeeze every ounce of "flexibility" they can out of their workforces. As far as they are concerned, the battle for productivity means abolishing "rigid work rules" and creating the new multifunctional, team-player worker. They want a new workplace regime which takes away the last vestiges of worker control.

In the 1940's and 1950's, many unions made an implicit deal with the employers: we give up much of our control on the shop floor, and you give us more money. This "worked" until the employers decided they couldn't afford it anymore. Now the employers want it all.

2) *Rank and file activism at the workplace is the foundation of the labor movement.*

Labor historian David Montgomery says: "Unions had their origins in the attempt to get some sort of collective control over the conditions of work, running all the way from wage

rates to work rules, in the 19th century. The workplace is both where the union movement had its birth, and where the daily conflict lies that makes it impossible to snuff the union movement out."

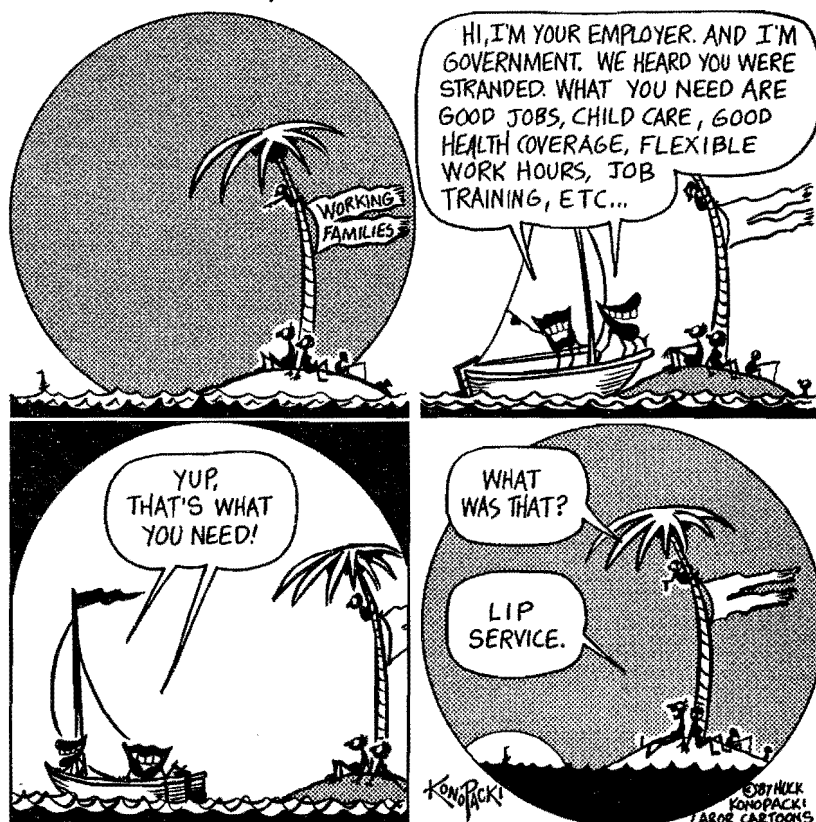
Even for those of us who have good wages and decent working conditions, the employer's power—often an arbitrary power—rankles. The employer has the power to close the plant or agency, to fire us, to lay us off, to discipline us, to transfer us, to change our job, to increase our workload. The employer has the power.

But the employer does not have *all* the power. Most of us simply don't accept the idea that the boss should control everything. We resist, and that resistance is the source of our power. It was this resistance at the workplace which gave birth to unions.

It is at the workplace that the conflict first arises between management which gives the orders and workers who must take the orders. It is a conflict built into the system of free enterprise, big business, or capitalism, call it what you will. It is a conflict which cannot be wished away and which will always resurface as long as employers own the workplace and workers do not.

Just as there is a natural tendency for employers and workers to be driven into conflict, there is also a natural tendency for workers to be brought together in solidarity. We work together to get the job done. We depend on each other for help and support to do so. In some occupations we depend on each other for our very survival.

The union is born out of that solidarity. Before there was the union, there was simply solidarity. When workers help and protect each other on the job, that is solidarity. When workers do not snitch on each other



to management, that is solidarity. When workers do not compete with each other to work faster, that is solidarity. When workers first joined together in collective action to slow down production to a human pace in order to protect their jobs, health, and earnings, that was solidarity becoming a union.

We Are the Experts

Why is the workplace the source of our strength? Our strength begins with the fact that at the workplace we are experts. Collectively we know just about everything about the company or agency, about the products, the service, the customer. We know the employer's strengths and its weaknesses, we know the pressure points. Our knowledge is a tremendous source of power.

In addition, we have the power to slow down production or even to stop it. While internationalized production may have weakened this power, strikes nevertheless remain a potent weapon. Particular departments or plants may have the power to shut down an entire enterprise because they produce a key component. Some newfangled ways of organizing production such as "just in time" inventory make a company even more vulnerable to job actions and strikes. Public employees' job actions may disrupt essential services.

For many public employees the workplace is the interface between workers and the public. Teachers meet students and parents; health care workers meet

patients. For public employees the workplace is the place not only to organize themselves but to reach out and organize the support of those whom they are serving.

3) *It is in the daily struggles on the shop floor that workers often gain the confidence to get involved in union affairs and take on broader issues.* An active union presence in the workplace can lay the basis for larger mobilizations, from contract campaigns to political campaigns. Conversely, powerlessness and disorganization on the job undermine our ability to act collectively in the broader society. Workers need not only strong unions, but coalitions with other social movements. Such coalitions will not be constructed on the basis of weakness.

★ ★ ★

If the labor movement is to be reinvigorated and reformed so that it can improve the lives of all working people, such a revival will start from the bottom up. Every workplace has its troublemakers, but troublemakers armed with the tactical experience of the last few years become something more powerful: organizers.

We think the fight for a strong labor movement starts today. It starts today where you work. Take this book and go out and make trouble.

Notes

1. For a more complete analysis, see *An Injury To All: The Decline of American Unionism*, by Kim Moody. See Appendix E.

Basics of Organizing 2.

You have a problem at work. You believe that management is being unfair. Something has to be done. But where do you begin?

This chapter is about the fundamentals of dealing with problems where you work, whether in a union or a non-union workplace. It will talk about the things to do *before* you start organizing and about some of the tried-and-true principles of organizing.

No Personal Problems

One of the basic ideas behind this book is that the solutions to problems which seem to be personal ones are usually collective.



The employer tries to make us believe that our problems are merely personal. For example: the boss calls Barbara into the office and writes her up for being late. Barbara explains that she was late because her sitter was late. The boss says he's sorry, but he can't bend the rules for one person. As she leaves the office, Barbara may think: "But it isn't one person, it's everyone in the office. Everybody in this place has been absent or late at least once because of a problem with childcare."

And it isn't just in that office. Columnist Anna Quindlen wrote in the *New York Times*, "[What if a union of working mothers held] a one-day nationwide strike. In unison at a predetermined time, we will rise and say: 'My kid is sick, and so is my sitter,' and walk out. Look around your office. Think of how many desks would be empty. Think of how much work wouldn't get done."

The need for childcare—to choose just one example—affects tens of millions of workers. The same applies to other "personal" problems such as reactions to chemicals, injuries, and stress. It is in management's interest to make the problems appear to be "personal" so that management will not bear responsibility.

There are common problems and there are collective solutions. That is the underlying premise of this book. From here on when we refer to what *you* can do, we do not mean *you* as an individual, but rather you and your co-workers. "You all," as they say down South.

See Chapter 17, *Organizing in a Non-Union Workplace*, and Chapter 18, *Organizing the Unorganized*, for more basic information.

Ask Questions and Listen to the Answers

The suggestions in this section may seem to apply primarily to the beginning organizer in a non-union workplace, or to a rank and filer in a workplace

Your Legal Rights To Organize

A. General.

The most important "legal" advice is to be well organized. Legal strategies aid day-to-day work. They don't take the place of it. Any position, legal or otherwise, is going to be enhanced if the people behind it act as a group, have plans that are thought out, and follow through on it. If the matter comes to a hearing or to court, any judge is going to be impressed by a well-attended and well-organized presentation.

Don't set yourself up. Be a model worker, come on time, and be above reproach.

Keep a notebook of all suspicious things. Record the Five W's: *What* happened, *where* it happened, *when* it happened, *who* saw it (names, addresses, phones), and *why* each party claimed to act as they did.

B. Your Right to Distribute Literature.

You have an absolute legal right to distribute literature.

In the workplace, the law says you can do it in nonworking areas on nonworking time. This includes the parking lot, the time-clock, the cafeteria, or any place where people go on break out of the work area. Aisles are usually considered work areas, but that could depend on the circumstances.

If you are soliciting or taking signatures on petitions but not distributing literature, you may do so in working areas on nonworking time.

If you are merely discussing union issues, you may do so anywhere on nonworking time. You may also discuss union issues on working time, if it doesn't interfere with your work. If workers carry on conversations on other personal topics then you can discuss union topics too.

You have an absolute right to distribute literature at or in common areas of the union hall, including union meetings.

C. Strikes, Picketing, and Other Protected Activities.

Unless there is in effect a contract with a no-strike clause, you may engage in group action to force the company to accept union conditions.

Such activities are only protected under federal labor law if done by two or more individuals together. Striking, picketing, petitioning, grieving, group complaints to the Department of Labor are the classic examples.

This right is protected by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), which must receive and serve your charge within six months. However, the NLRB has a policy of deferring action on such cases if there is a grievance procedure in effect which theoretically could resolve the issue.

without much union presence. But most of them also apply to stewards or union officers. Many stewards have become accustomed to the idea that once they are elected or appointed, it's their job to solve problems for the members. In fact, stewards are much more effective when they think of themselves as organizers—catalysts, leaders, but not Lone Rangers.

You have a problem; where do you begin?

Some people when they first feel they have been treated unfairly fly into a rage or start loudly crusading against the boss. This can be dangerous. Management jealously guards its authority in the workplace, and when you begin to question authority you become a threat. In most workplaces, from the moment you start to question authority, you become a troublemaker in management's eyes. If you have never before made any waves where you work, you may be shocked, hurt or angered by how quickly management turns against you. This is one more reason not to act alone, and also to be discreet when you begin to talk to others.

Talk to your co-workers and ask them what they think about what's happening at work lately. What do they think about the problem you're concerned about? Listen to what others have to say. Get their views and opinions. Most people think of an organizer as an agitator and a rabble-rouser (and there are times when an organizer must be those things), but a good organizer is first of all one who asks good questions and listens well to others. Having listened well, the organizer is able to express not only his or her own views and feelings but those of the group.

Almost inevitably there will be some people who are more concerned than others, and a few of those people will want to do something about it. Those few people now form the initial core of your "organization." You might ask the two most interested people to have coffee or lunch with you, introduce them to each other, and then ask, "What do you think we should do about this?" If they are indeed ready to do something—not just complain—you are almost ready to begin organizing.

Map Your Workplace

Knowledge is power. Or at least it is the beginning of power. You will want to know everything you can about your workplace and your employer. This will be a long-term, on-going process of education. Appendix B on Researching Your Employer describes how to uncover the bigger picture of how your workplace fits into the company, the industry, and the overall economy.

But for now you begin with your department. Following is a description of how to map your workplace to reveal how people are already organized, both formally and informally, by the work process and by their social inclinations. It will show you how to find and use the natural leaders who already exist in every workplace. (This section, written by Rick Smith, is reprinted from *Labor Notes*, January 1987. Smith was

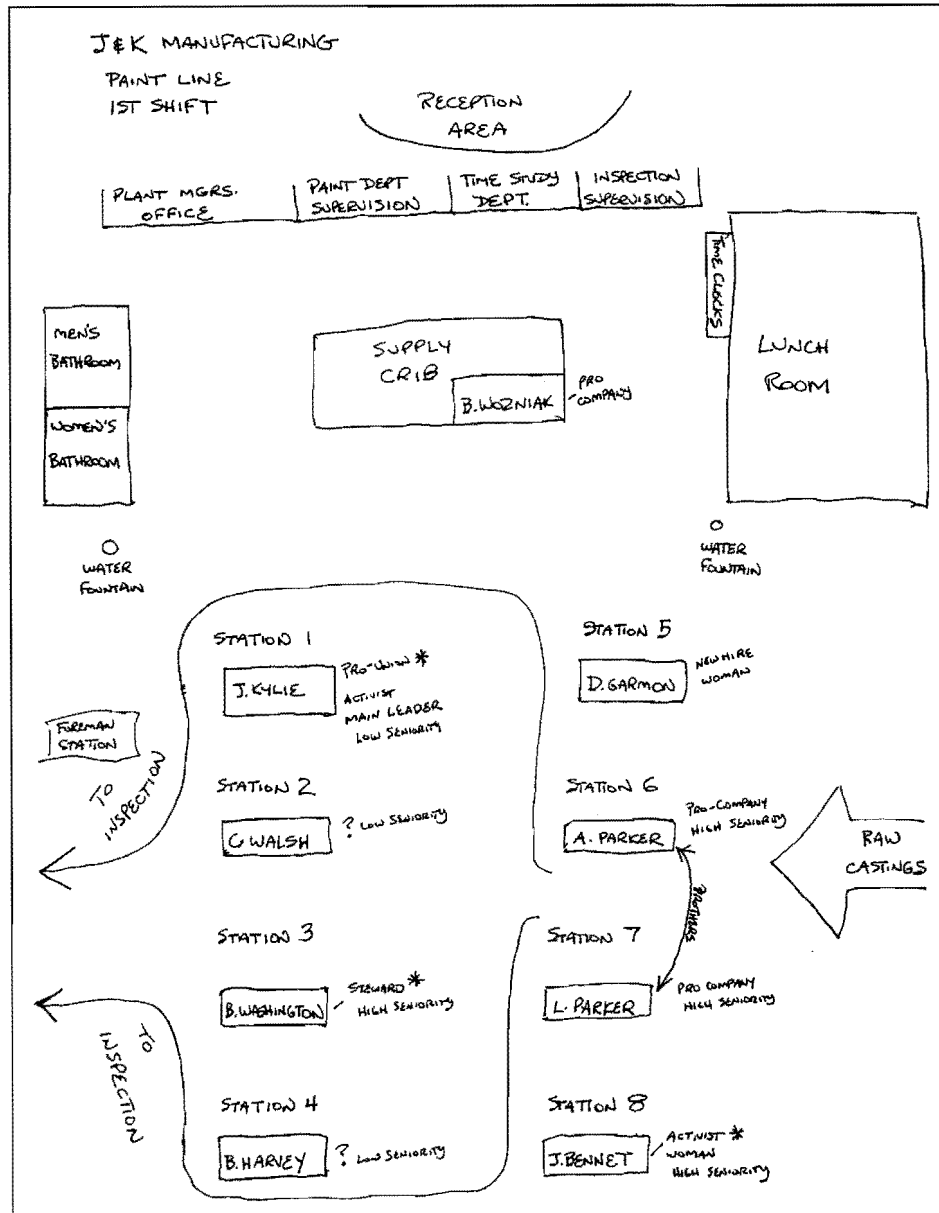
on the staff of Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), the national reform organization within the Teamsters, and is now an organizer for Teamster Local 728 in Atlanta.)

The steward or shop floor activist cannot afford to overlook the natural organization that exists in most workplaces. Resist the tendency to complicate shop floor organization by establishing artificial structures or involved committees and caucuses without first taking advantage of the organization that already exists. "Mapping" your workplace will help you to communicate with your co-workers and increase the union's power.

Management has long understood the value of identifying informal work groups, their leaders, and their weak links. In fact, one of the main thrusts of management training is to develop strategies to alter the psychology of the workplace.

United Parcel Service, for example, has developed its psychological manipulation techniques to a fine art. The UPS managers' training manual, titled *Charting the Spheres of Influence*, shows how to map the workplace to identify the informal work groups, isolate leadership of these groups, exploit the weak links, and in the end, break up the groups if they can't be used to management's advantage.

While most companies haven't developed their techniques to the fine Orwellian art that UPS has, many do use some of the same methods. Have outspoken workers or leaders in your workplace been transferred, promoted into management or singled



An example of a workplace map.

out for discipline? Are work groups broken up and rearranged periodically? Has the layout of the workplace been arranged to make communication between workers difficult?

Do you get to walk around on your job? Who does? Who doesn't? Are certain people picked on or disciplined by management in public? How does this affect the rest of the workforce? Do you feel you are always under surveillance? You get the point. All of the above can be used to break up unity and communication between workers in your shop.

How To Map Your Workplace

If you work in a large shop, you may want to begin by mapping just your department or shift and then work with

other stewards to piece together a map of the entire workplace.

You can begin by drawing an outline of your department and putting in work stations, desks, machines, etc.—a floor plan. Now, place a circle where each worker is usually stationed, and write in their names. If you can, chart the flow of production by using a broken line or arrow. Indicate on your map where members of management are usually stationed and their normal path through the shop. Mark the places where workers tend to congregate (break areas, lunch rooms, bathrooms, water fountains).

Now identify and circle the informal work groups. Informal work groups are groups of workers who work face to face with each other every day. They have an opportunity to communicate to each other every day while working and perhaps spend time together on breaks, eat lunch together, or generally

hang out with each other.

Mark the influential people or informal work group leaders. In each group is there a person who seems to enjoy a special influence or respect? Sometimes they're stewards or activists, but in many cases the leaders will not be. Do conversations in the group ever get into shop talk? If so, what do they talk about? Is there an unspoken code of behavior in these groups towards management or problems at work? Is there an informal production standard which is followed and enforced by group members?

If you're aware of loners or people who don't mix with any group, indicate that by using some special mark. Also, identify the weakest links: the company brown nose, perhaps a part-timer or new hire, and anyone who is particularly timid.

You may want to begin taking notes on each worker and record such things as when the person started work, grievances filed, whether they have been active in any union projects, etc. Keep these notes on separate index cards in a file.

Your map may show you how the workplace is set up to keep people apart, a good enough reason for map making. But the real reason for map making is to develop more unity and power in the workplace.

Using Your Map

Let's say you have an important message to communicate, but you don't have the time or resources to reach every worker. If you can reach the leaders of the informal work groups and get them on your side, you can bet that the word can get around to everyone. Once leaders have been identified and agree to cooperate, it's possible to develop a network which includes both stewards and these de facto stewards who can exert considerable power and influence.

Informal work groups also have the advantage of creating certain loyalties among their members. You can draw on this loyalty to figure out unified strategies for problems, and take advantage of people's natural tendency to stick up for those who are close to them.

Sometimes it's necessary to negotiate between the work groups which, while experiencing common problems, also have concerns involving only their own members. For example, at one shop I worked at, two informal work groups existed in my department. One group consisted of machine operators who die-casted transmission cases, and the other of inspectors. Management didn't allow inspectors to talk to machine operators.

At one point management increased machine operators' production quotas, which caused inspectors to mark many of the pieces as scrap, because they were having trouble keeping up with production too. Both work groups were facing pressures from the speed-up and tended to blame each other.

Eventually the leaders of the two work groups worked out an arrangement to deal with the speed-up. It was agreed that the inspectors would mark as scrap any transmission case with the tiniest little flaw, causing the scrap to pile up. Management would then have

to come up and turn off the machines in order to figure out what was causing the problems. Soon each machine was experiencing a few hours of downtime every day. After a week of this, management reduced the production quota.

Besides working with the group leaders, it's important to draw in the loners too. More than likely, their apathy, isolation, or anti-union ideas stem from personal feelings of powerlessness and fear. If collective action can be pulled off successfully and a sense of security established through the group's action, fear and feelings of impotence can be reduced.

If you've got a particularly tough cookie in your shop who seriously threatens unity, don't be afraid to use the social pressures that work groups can bring to bear to get that person back in line. This applies to supervisory personnel too, especially the supervisor who likes to think he's everyone's pal.

The Balance of Power

The bottom line for this type of workplace organization is to tilt the balance of power in the workers' favor. It can win grievances, for example. If grievances remain individual problems and are kept in the hands of just the steward or union higher-ups, the natural organization and loyalty that exist among work groups is lost. Chances are that the grievance is lost, too.

However, if the work groups can be used to make a show of unity, the threat that production could be hampered can be enough to force management into a settlement. For example, back in the die casting plant: a machine operator was fired on trumped-up charges. The leader in that work group informed key people in the skilled trades who had easy access to all in the plant to tell them something was going to happen at lunch time in the lunch room.

At each lunch break, a meeting was held to explain the situation. It was decided to organize for a symbolic action. The next day black armbands were handed out in the parking lot to everyone entering work. The key people in every work group were informed to use their influence to enforce the action. It was suggested that everyone has an off day once in a while, and it would really be a shame if everyone had an off day at the same time.

After two days of this, the machine operator was brought back to work. Such an action would have been impossible without a recognition of the informal work groups and their leaders. The grievance procedure worked because management understood that the grievance had become the concern of all the groups and that problems lay ahead unless it was resolved.

Some Basic Principles

The rest of this book will show how people have used various organizing strategies and tactics. We recommend that you go from here to Chapter 3, Shop Floor Tactics.



However, before you do, following is a list of what successful organizers say are the most important principles to remember. You may want to come back and look at this list again when you have read the book.

- **Question Authority.** Organizing begins when people question authority. Someone asks, "What are they doing to us? Why are they doing it? Is it right?" Encourage people to ask, Who is making the decisions, who is being forced to live with the decisions, and why should that be so? People should not accept a rule or an answer simply because it comes from the authorities, whether that authority is the government, the boss, the union—or you. An effective organizer encourages co-workers to think for themselves.

- **Talk One-on-One.** Almost every activist interviewed for this book said, "The most important thing about organizing is personal, one-on-one discussion." Leaflets are necessary, meetings are important, rallies are wonderful—but none of them will ever take the place of one-on-one discussion. Frequently when you have simply listened to a co-worker and heard what is on his mind, you have won him over because you are the only one who will listen. When you talk to Linda at the next desk and overcome her fears, answer her questions, lift her morale, invite her to the meeting, or take her to the rally—that's what organizing is all about.

- **Find the Natural Leaders.** Every workplace has its social groupings of co-workers and friends.

Each group has its opinion makers, its natural leaders. They are not always the loudest or the most talkative, but they are the ones the others listen to. You will have gone a long way if you win over those natural leaders.

- **Get People Involved in Activity.**

Life is not a schoolroom and people do not learn simply from going to meetings or reading leaflets. Most people learn, change, and grow in the process of action. Will you take this leaflet? Will you pass it on to your friend? Will you mail in this postcard? Will you sign this petition? If you want to develop new leaders, you must give them something they can do, however small that first step is.

- **Make That Collective Activity.**

However, the point is not only to get individuals involved, but to join them together in a solidarity-conscious group. We want to create a group which sees itself as a whole: We are the Union. We are the Movement. Will you come to the meeting? Can we get the whole department to visit the boss together? Can we count on all of you for the picket line?

- **Activities Should Escalate Over Time.**

Ask people to become involved in activities of increasing commitment and difficulty. Are you willing to wear a button saying "Vote No"? Will you vote against the contract? Will you vote for a strike? Are you prepared to walk a picket line? Are you willing to be arrested? Several of the campaigns in this book included hundreds of people willingly going to jail for something they believed in. For many of them it started with that first question, Will you take this leaflet?

- **Confront Management.** Organizing is about changing power relationships, changing the balance of forces between management and workers. Confrontation with the employer has to be built into the escalating activities. The first confrontation may be something as simple as wearing a "Vote No" button. If people are not willing to risk upsetting the boss, they won't win.

- **Win Small Victories.** Most movements, from a small group in one workplace to massive social protests which change society (like the civil rights or women's movements), grow on the basis of small victories. The victories give us the confidence that we can do more. They win us new supporters who now see that "you can fight City Hall." With each victory the group becomes more confident and therefore capable of winning larger victories.

- **Organization Is Everything.** Organization need not be overly formal or structurally top-heavy, but it must be there. A telephone tree and a mailing list may be all the organization you need, but if those things are what you need then you *must* have them. The last twenty years have supplied many examples of

reform movements which arose, fought hard—and then died because they didn't stay organized. As one of the old TDU leaders, Bill Slater, says, "Only the organized survive."

Action Questions

1. Does your boss ever tell you you have a personal problem when it is really a problem common to many workers? How does the boss tell you to solve it? How might it be solved in order to help everybody?

2. Draw a map of your workplace showing the different departments or rooms. Put an X in key areas which control the flow of production and circle the informal work groups.

3. Below is a sociogram of a typical workplace. Each circle with the attached names is a work group. The person in the middle is the leader or opinion maker of that group. Lines connecting different circles are drawn between friends or individuals who influence each other's thinking. Fill in the blank sociogram with the names and groups in your workplace, modifying the drawing if necessary.

4. Make a list of the recurring problems that are

brought up by your co-workers. Which problem would you choose to talk to your co-workers about first? Why would you choose that issue? How would you approach them?

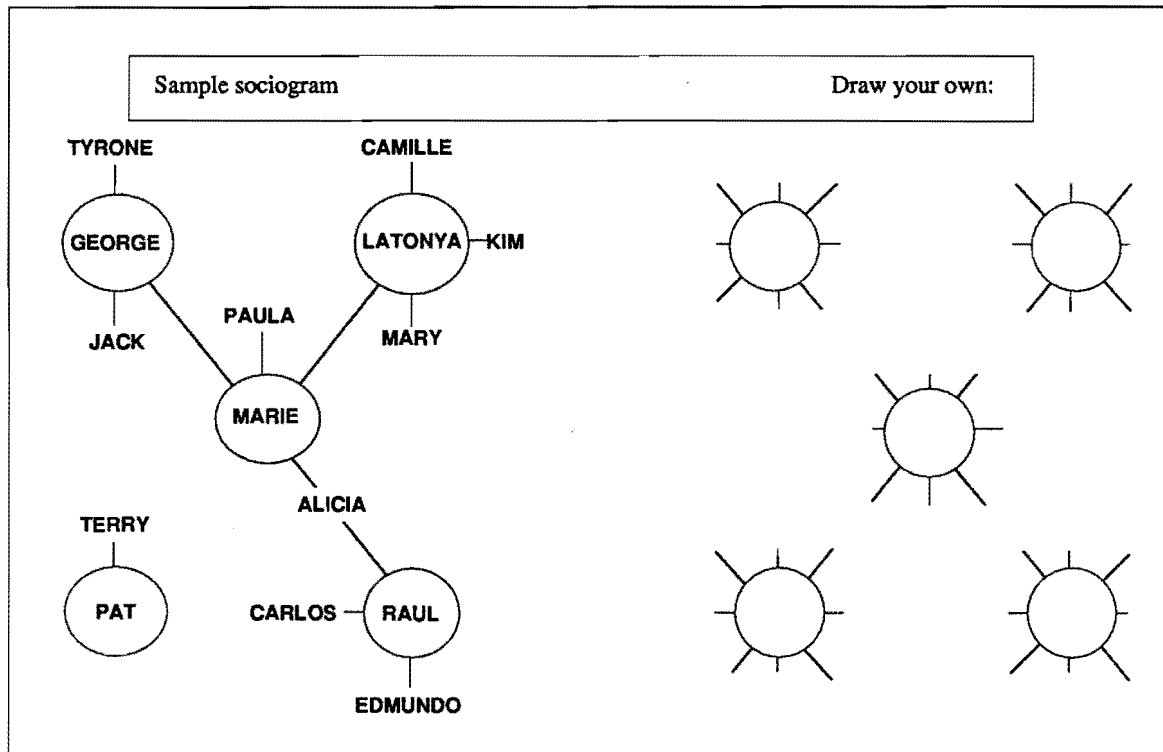
5. Organizing is often a question of judging different individuals' strengths and weaknesses, and helping to draw out their strengths. Make a list of the closest ten people with whom you work. Which two or three would you begin by talking to? Why? What are their strengths?

6. If you wanted to meet discreetly, where would you meet? Could you talk at work, in the cafeteria, in the parking lot? Would it be best to meet in a coffee shop or a bar? Would it be good to meet at someone's home?

7. If you are answering these questions with your co-workers, pool what you know about the company or agency. Who are the key decision makers? Who owns it? How is it organized? Are there other branches, offices or plants in your area? Are they unionized?

8. What do you know about your local union? What is the name of your International? Who is the top officer? Who is the union representative in your

workplace or your department? Do you have a copy of the contract? Do you have a copy of the union by-laws and constitution? (You should be able to get the by-laws from your local union representative, but if not, you can get them through the Office of Labor-Management Services. See Appendix B for more suggestions on researching your employer and your union.)



Shop Floor Tactics 3.

You've got a problem in the workplace. Why not simply file a grievance? Perhaps the word "file" is the clue. Ask any successful shop floor activist: it's a mistake to rely simply on the contract and the grievance procedure to settle problems. Successful organizing requires rank and file action, visible organizing on the shop floor in confrontation with management.

As Bud Schulte, former steward in a meatpacking plant, puts it: "When we met with the foreman, it was not just me and the foreman. We always tried to take as many people as we could into these meetings. Once the foremen realized that it wasn't just the other steward and myself who was making these complaints out of thin air, he was a little more conducive to doing some things for us."

Grievances must of course be filed, but they should also be fought for by:

- Making them **visible and public**, so that the members are aware of what is taking place.
- Making them **collective, group grievances** involving as many members as possible.
- Making them **active**, involving the members themselves in various actions.
- Making them **confrontational**, so that members are mobilized to face the company officials who are causing their problems and who have the power to resolve them.

See Chapter 17 on Organizing in the Non-Union Workplace for more creative shop floor tactics.

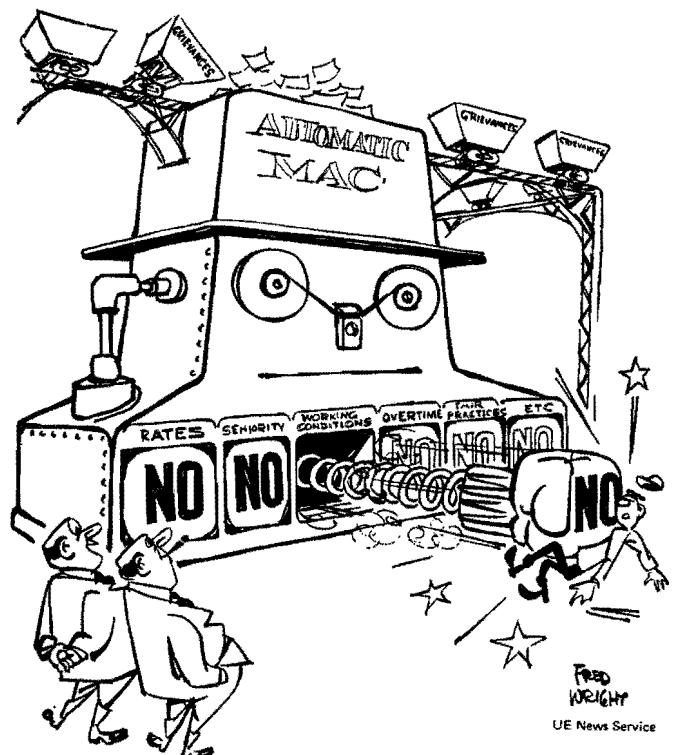
Of course, the shop floor activity described here can take place whether or not a grievance is formally filed. As your members become more organized and more accustomed to these sorts of activities, you may find that more and more problems can be resolved without resorting to formal grievances.

Joe Fahey is the president and business agent of Teamster Local 912 in Watsonville, California.

"Workplace organizing is often better than the

grievance procedure," says Fahey, "and it's also fun. It's fun because it works, because all of a sudden you feel your power. And when you feel everybody together you say, Yeah, this is what the union is. The union isn't the person who files the grievance and waits two or three months until it reappears and then presents it. When you win on the shop floor, everybody feels good.

"I've won a lot of grievances, and I'm glad I won, it's better than losing. But it's three months later and you wonder what was the grievance about anyway? And it doesn't mean that much to people. It reinforces



" See how well our automatic grievance machinery works! "

Why Grievances Are Not Enough

The contract is a kind of historical record of the achievements of the union, a sediment left behind by past organizing drives and strikes. It institutionalizes the victories of the past, and establishes the minimum that a worker should be able to expect from that employer.

It is a mistake, however, to view the contract as a sacred document. The agreement was not carried down from the mountain on stone tablets. It was the result of a struggle between the employer and the union, perhaps a lockout or strike, which eventually resulted in a compromise worked out at the negotiating table. The employer wanted more, and we wanted more. We were at war and a cease-fire was called and a truce was reached—until the conflict breaks out again.

In the meantime, every time management gets a chance, they will attempt to encroach into the territory that we have won, taking away things we thought the contract protected. The contract is combed by both management and the union in the search for possible interpretations. The contract is never interpreted literally. In the hands of a good union steward it is interpreted creatively in the interests of the members.

Being a union steward, however, is not a matter of mastering the art of interpretation. Winning your point often depends not so much on the contract language as on the power of the union.

Since the contract is the sediment of *past* struggles, it can tell you only what the balance of forces between management and labor was, say, in April three years ago, not what it is today. Winning a grievance or any other shop floor struggle depends on the balance of forces today.

Simply filing a grievance does nothing to alter that balance of forces in the members' favor. It is usually not a collective activity, but is carried out by one individual, the steward. It takes the issue off the shop floor and out of the hands of the rank and file members. While the grievance goes its way from step to step, the members have nothing to do but wait.

How Can Just Grievances Be Lost?

Besides these problems, there is no way that simply filing grievances could begin to redress the injustices that go on in every workplace every month. Let us imagine that there are 1,000 violations of the contract by management in a particular factory of 1,000 workers over the course of a month—probably a low estimate.

Then think about the workers who have these legitimate grievances:

- Some are probationary employees who are wise not to file a grievance yet.
- Some, perhaps newer workers, are not knowledgeable about the contract and do not know that they have the right to grieve.
- Some hope to go into management.

- Some are too shy or timid to speak up.
- Some who already face discrimination, such as members of racial minorities, women or gays, may fear that filing a grievance will only add to their problems.

• Some fear they will be marked as troublemakers and singled out for transfer or discipline.

- Some are immigrants who do not know English or are not familiar with the workings of unions.

Now think about the steward:

• Even a good union steward has limited time and energy, and so will not be able to constantly comb the shop getting all the shy or fearful workers to submit their grievances. Even the pretty good steward is likely to work with the grievances that are submitted and not worry about those that are not.

• In any case, a union steward must reach a *modus vivendi* with management, that is, they both have to live in that shop. He or she will have to exercise judgment about the many possible grievances. The steward has to pick her fights.

• If a grievance is not settled at the first or second step and goes into the machinery, it is no longer simply settled on its merits or the justice of the case. Union and management make trade-offs, and some just grievances will be traded off in what the officials see as the best interest of the union as a whole.

So, in the end, of the thousand just grievances which might have been filed, only perhaps a dozen are actually filed. The union leaders feel forced to trade away half of those. Finally a few are won months later, but perhaps only the workers directly involved ever know about them.

If one could read the thoughts of the thousand workers in this shop, some would be satisfied. But there would be hundreds who were resentful because they had suffered an injustice at management's hands.

Strengthening the Grievance System

What can a local union and individual stewards do to partially counteract these weaknesses of the grievance system? Besides the many tactics spelled out in this chapter:

• The union can periodically hold department or shop meetings in the plant, perhaps in the lunch area, to explain the members' rights and ask if they have problems.

• The stewards can create assistant stewards so that in the course of a week or two the steward or the assistants have talked to all the workers in the area, just to see how things are going. In this way shy workers are encouraged to come forward.

• The steward can make sure that there is somebody who can talk to workers in their own language.

the idea that the union is a bureaucracy and it's not the people.

"In many cases, if you can win with an effective workplace strategy, then it's better than what the contract says. The stewards come to me and say, 'Is this a grievance?' And I say, 'No, let's try it anyway.' And, because they've got the people behind them, they bluff their way into getting some past practice established that's not even in the contract."

When we organize over issues in the workplace, sometimes we are fighting to enforce the contract. Sometimes we are stretching the contract, trying to use the language to win something it wasn't intended for. Sometimes we fight for things which have no basis at all in the contract, but are issues the members care about.

In any case many of the same tactics can be used whether or not the issue has a basis in the contract language. The union's fundamental shop floor tools are economic pressure and political pressure.

This chapter deals mainly with organizing rank and file members. To read about organizing and training stewards, see the Stewards Corners by Paul Roose, John Clout, and Steve Hochman and Bill Mollenhauer at the end of this chapter.

Political Pressure

Political pressure, in this sense, does not refer to candidates or city councils. Politics is simply another word for power, the authority that allows management to retain control of the workplace. There are many ways to undermine that power.

Management's kind of power requires hierarchy,

hierarchy requires authorities, authorities have to be serious, and seriousness leads to pomposity. The boss becomes a pompous ass, and ridicule becomes a tool to deflate a self-important supervisor. Charlie Chaplin movies like "Modern Times" and "The Little Dictator" should be required viewing for stewards.

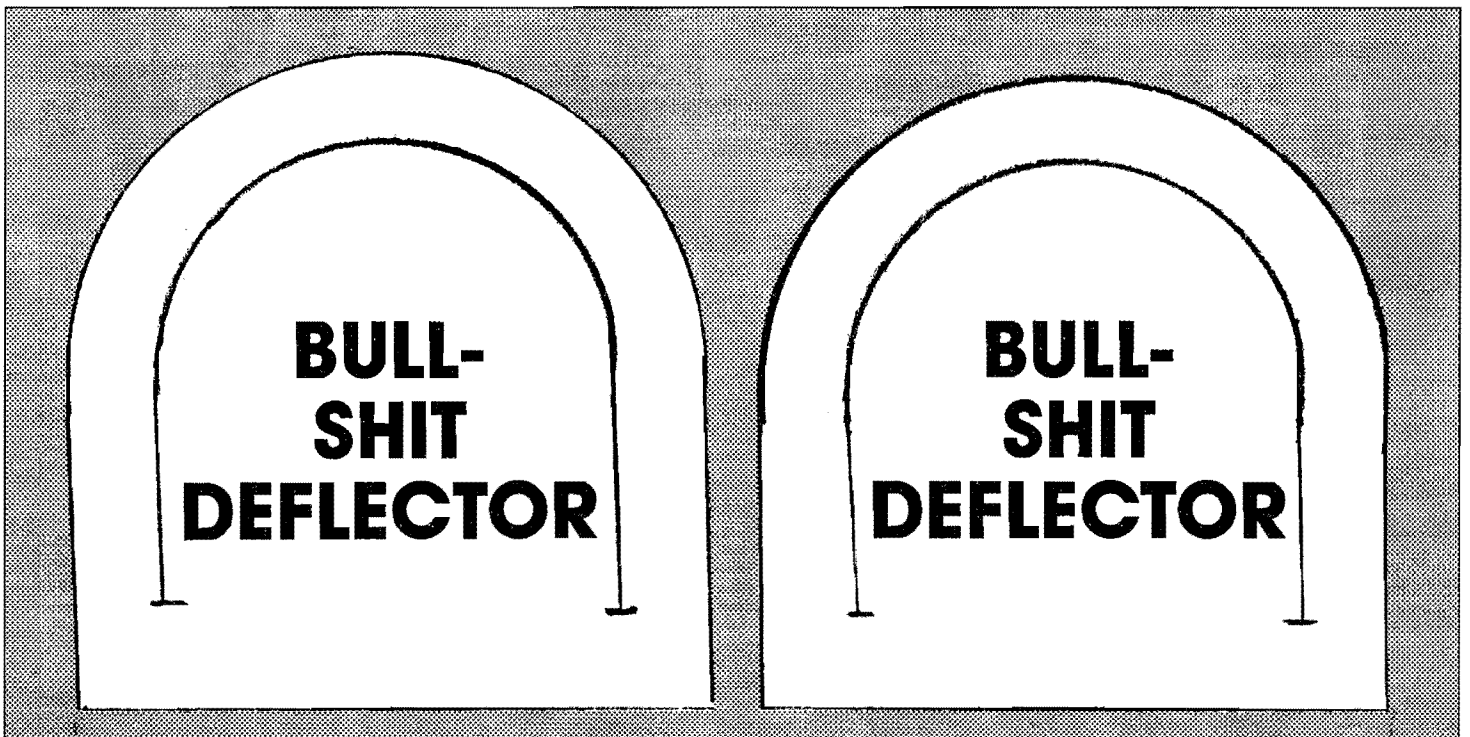
Management's kind of power rests on control from above. When the employees organize themselves from below and take initiative, that undermines management's control. Many organizers interviewed for this book observed that *any sort of unified action by workers seems to erode management's authority*, even if it is only a symbolic action such as wearing the same color t-shirts.

Management's kind of power is exerted within the boundaries of the workplace, and sometimes that power seems simply overwhelming. Sometimes in order to defeat that power it is necessary to expand the boundaries of the struggle beyond the workplace. The employer, who is God in the plant, may be merely mortal in the larger society. Other forces can be brought to bear, from the media to regulatory agencies to activist groups such as the National Organization for Women, the NAACP or Greenpeace. One well-placed phone call can do a lot of damage. *When other authorities are brought in, management's weight is diminished, and the union's weight is relatively greater.*

See Chapter 13 on Corporate Campaigns for much more on these political pressure tactics.

Ridicule

Suzanne Wall, a staffer for the Oregon Public Employees Union, SEIU Local 503, gives a couple of examples of how workers have used ridicule to chal-



Instructions: Cut out, and then cut along the curved inner lines. Wear one on each ear.

lenge overbearing supervisors.

"One of the branch managers of the Children's Service Division held a staff meeting," Wall remembers, "and insulted the workers by calling them slugs, which is a famous animal in Oregon." In the Pacific Northwest slugs grow to a size of six inches to a foot long; some are bright yellow and particularly revolting to the squeamish.

"So the next day at work they decided to turn it around on him. They went out and bought shiny plastic stuff and made slug trails, slime trails all over the office, and put up signs that said 'Slug Crossing Here.' They did a petition at the same time. And it worked so well that the next day the manager, who could never apologize officially, brought in a plate of doughnuts marked 'Slug Bait.'"

At another Children's Service office there was a similar incident when the manager referred to a group of workers who had gathered to discuss a problem as a bunch of crybabies.

"So the workers all started wearing stickers in a series on the crybaby theme. One was, 'I'm a crybaby too.' Another was, 'There is reason to cry.' At the end of the week they all gathered in the parking lot for a unity break and did a 'cry-in' and everybody just wailed and moaned."

Rand Wilson, who now works as a free-lance union consultant, tells of the time he worked for a biotechnology company. "There were about 200 people in the plant and a dozen in my work area. One time everybody in my department was ticked off because we had too many bosses, and it was one of those departments where you don't know who is the boss. Believe me, it's a lot of aggravation.

"So we made up these organizational charts which showed this vast layer of bureaucracy and bosses over the workers in that department. We xeroxed them and pinned them on our smocks and we wore them around. Everybody in the department loved it.

"Everybody agreed to wear it, and that was unifying, and then it made such a statement to the bosses it sent them into a complete tizzy. We got a meeting with one of the higher-up supervisors within hours and a good airing of our grievance. And it was also nice because word went around that that group has their act together."

The Group Grievance or Petition

To make a collective protest the activist or steward simply gets as many workers as possible to sign on to a grievance. Or if the contract forbids more than a certain number of employees from signing a grievance, they can sign a petition supporting it. The steward can then take the group to visit the manager.

Mary Baird works for Ohio Bell as a service technician in repair. "When I first started working at the phone company I was a clerical worker," says Baird. "We typed orders into computer terminals. There were about 14 of us and I was appointed steward.

"It was a real oppressive work situation. The supervisor was abusive to these women who were quite

young, most of them only a few years out of high school. They had no consciousness about what it meant to have a union, or that they had any particular rights. They were doing things like going to tell the supervisor on each other, having cat fights in the hall. It was just horrendous.

"I started on the very basic level of letting them know that I was the union steward and giving everybody a copy of the grievance procedure. And then I started this little one-page 'conspiracy' type newsletter. I didn't make copies of it, we just passed it around. It had cartoons and a few things about incidents that were occurring. People really got a kick out of that.

"Then a few incidents occurred where the foreman got so abusive with her language that one of the older women actually got sick at her stomach. So I filed a grievance and convinced everybody to sign it. Usually you just had one person sign it. This was stepping outside of procedure.

"I had come from a previous location in Kentucky where I was the steward, and you always took the grievant into the meeting with you. Here you didn't do that, the steward just went in with the foreman and talked about it. But I insisted that all 14 people who signed the grievance should take part in the meeting.

"Then they took myself and a chief steward aside, the manager and the manager's boss, and gave us a sob story about how this supervisor was on probation for excessive grievances, and she'd been moved from other locations. And could we please not put this in writing, or could we rescind it with the promise that things will improve?

"I said, 'Well, I can't answer for all these people, you have 14 people here that have filed this grievance, so we're going to have to have time to discuss this.' They gave us an hour of company time with no management around. One of the women had been in the Marines for five years, and she told the difference between being here where we have a union and being in the Marines where you had to stand on your head and spit a nickel if they told you to. It was real exciting. People changed real fast. And at the end of the hour we said, No, we weren't going to rescind our grievance.

"The supervisor became a non-management worker in another location a few months after that. But really she needed to. And you know, I ran into her at a Christmas party someplace about two years down the road, and she thanked me. She said, 'I just couldn't deal with that position.'"

Baird tells of another incident:

"I was a service rep then. There was this poor older woman named Pat who was put on final warning and threatened with being fired if any time within the next 12 months she was a minute late to work or absent. It was terrible because she was only about nine months from getting all of her 25 years seniority, so they were trying to get rid of her. It put her in this position where she was about to have a nervous breakdown.

"This was a much bigger office, there were 50 some workers. A lot of people wanted to walk out, to go on a wildcat strike, they were pretty angry. But it wasn't going to be effective, because only about a third of the people would do it. So we made up a flyer and we put a little cartoon figure with a picket sign on it, and it said, 'Standing Up for Pat Is Standing Up For Me.' It outlined all of the atrocious things they were trying to do and really made the company look bad.

"Then we had a petition and five or six of us circulated the petition in the parking lot outside of the building in the morning. Everybody signed the petition because we were going into the first level grievance that day.

"Normally these things drag out and eventually go clear to the top and something may or may not happen, but this woman was desperate and people were really angry and that's how we organized around it. And when we went into the grievance meeting, the thing was settled. She was taken off final warning."

The Group Protest

In a group protest a worker or steward gathers other workers together and they go together to visit the supervisor or higher authority. This type of action has several advantages: it tends to interrupt production, at least for a little while. It can have an element of physical intimidation. If it is planned discreetly and carried out suddenly, it can have the added advantage of surprise.

Ronnie Allen, a former committeeperson at General Motors' gear and axle plant in Detroit, says, "People talk about an older workforce. Sometimes they get stagnant and set in their ways, and so you have to generate some enthusiasm, get them involved, so they're accomplishing something for themselves. And the way to do that is to have floor-type actions on contractual language that management is not abiding by.

"In the skilled trades area, they're supposed to supply coveralls. An individual goes to the crib to get a pair of clean coveralls, and they're not available for him in his size, or they're torn or whatever. If this goes on on a regular basis, then what you have to do is get a group of skilled tradesmen as a whole to say, 'We either want coveralls to work in, or we're not going to work in these soiled coveralls.' One time I took a group of eighty skilled tradesmen over to the crib and said, 'Hey, we demand to have coveralls.' That's one tactic to get people involved."

Ann Cohen is the president of AFSCME Local 1637 representing 1,500 blue and pink collar employees of the city of Philadelphia. Her members have thrown contractors out of city facilities.

"Let me tell you who we threw out," says Cohen. "We threw out some rug shampooers. We threw out some people who had come to paint file cabinets, some people who were doing installation of security gates.

"What happens is the reps get really mad and go to the people and say, 'I'm so sick of filing grievances,

it doesn't work. Let's go throw them out.'

"Usually these are two-bit contractors, they have three or four guys, and we go over with 30 or 40 folks, and we say to them, 'We're sorry, but you're doing our work, and we'd like you to leave.' Of course they do.

"We have contract language that says management must give 30 days notice of their contemplation of contracting out and meet all these economic requirements, and the cases where we've thrown folks out they have just completely ignored the contract. We do it in conjunction with grievances and arbitrations.

"The crew that has helped the most on these kinds of things is the custodial crew in the Department of Public Property, either second or third shift. Because the city will bring in the contractors after normal work hours, so it's the custodial crew that finds them. The custodial workers are probably the lowest on the ladder in terms of pay and respect, but they are the watchdogs, and that's real good for morale.

"We tell the carpenters and the electricians and the painters that the custodians threw the outside contractors out. We have a great steward now, she's just a really feisty older woman. She says, 'Well, I hope I did the right thing, I took the people and we threw them out.'"

See Chapter 12 on Inside Strategies for more on group protests.

Pulling Out of United Way

Often corporations put great stake in their charitable contributions to organizations such as the United Way. Many managers take great pride in reaching one hundred percent employee participation. For the corporation these contributions represent good will and good advertising. Sometimes an organized withdrawal of support will upset the company almost as much as a concerted action on the job.

One company that takes United Way seriously is United Parcel Service. J. Anthony Smith, a UPS package car driver and a steward in Teamster Local 639 in northern Virginia, says, "One time another steward and I were suspended. The workers' response to that was to start a withdrawal from United Way. They made it very clear that nobody was against United Way, and that they wanted people to continue to give money to United Way. They even provided people with addresses and phone numbers so they could continue to give money—but they would not do it through the company. They took that feather from their cap."

Smith and his fellow steward were returned to work.

Pickets and Outside Pressure

Sometimes political pressure on the employer should come from both inside and outside the workplace simultaneously. Paul Krissel is president of the Pennsylvania Social Services Union, Local 668 of the Service Employees, representing social service workers employed by the state.

"One office had a terrible manager who had been harassing and intimidating the workers," says Krissel, "and we developed a campaign to create an embarrassing situation for that person and for the Welfare Department. The Welfare Department ended up moving her from the office. That required a lot of activity on the part of the members.

"This particular person had harassed and intimidated people who were activists in the union. So we filed some unfair labor practice charges, and we had the members involved in stating the particulars: here's all the things that this woman did.

"Then when the manager brought this one union member into her office to interrogate her over her involvement with the union folks, our members did a demonstration. They did an informational picket.

"Then they flooded the phone lines to [the state capitol in] Harrisburg with calls from every worker demanding that they cease and desist. They did a lot of informational pickets, they brought in local politicians, they brought in some of the state legislators. They said, Come into our office and we'll tell you all the horror stories about this manager and how she disrupts the workforce and treats people in an arbitrary fashion. And that worked." The manager was removed.

Economic Pressure

The union has many ways to bring economic pressure short of a strike:

- **Work-to-rule** campaigns in which workers adhere exactly to company procedures or to the contract.

- **Slowdowns**, in which members reduce output to an agreed amount.

- **Making scrap**, producing products which will not pass quality control.

- **Getting lost**, a common practice of warehouse workers, maintenance crews, truck drivers and others who work in large facilities or on the streets and are not easy to police. Some of these practices can get you disciplined; for example, truck drivers may be charged with "stealing time."

- **Refusing to donate time.** Many workers "donate" unpaid time to the company by beginning work before they are on the clock, working through breaks or lunch, or staying after work. If the union organizes a meeting or other action for the 15 minutes before starting time or for lunch time, they cut into this unpaid work.

Activities that affect production schedules will be taken very seriously by management. Meeting a production schedule may be the basis for a supervisor's bonus, for example. The company may lose a customer if it falls behind in its orders. This, of course, is the point.

Therefore such actions must be taken even more seriously by the union. They require planning, discretion, practice, timing, and above all they require unity. See the note at the end of this chapter for some legal points.¹

Work-to-Rules

A work-to-rule campaign takes advantage of the fact that management theoretically has one way of doing things ("going by the book") but in practice wants workers to take short-cuts in the name of productivity. In a work-to-rule workers meticulously abide by the contract and any written company rules and work procedures which may apply. Workers take no short-cuts, show no initiative in solving problems, and if any difficulty presents itself ask management for instructions. For example, says Georgia Butler, treasurer of Mail Handlers Local 307, "When management is not treating us right, we have what we call 'A Fair Day's Work for a Fair Day's Pay Day.' When you don't do anything extra, you miss many dispatches."

By its very nature the work-to-rule campaign, properly executed, is not in violation of the contract. On the contrary, it is based on strict adherence to the rules, and this is its virtue. Management is sending two contradictory signals about how the work is to be done, and no one can blame the workers for choosing the one that benefits them. A work-to-rule can be used as a pressure tactic on any issue, from getting rid of a supervisor to protesting unfair discipline to extra persuasion in a contract campaign.

UPS workers in northern Virginia have developed work-to-rules to a fine art. UPS management routinely conducts strict methods audits where the slightest misstep is considered a failure to follow instructions and is used for disciplinary action. To resist such harassment, stewards Anthony Smith and Doug Bell have organized Methods Awareness Days, or MAD days.

"They keep coming out with all these rules and regulations and instructions and things that you're supposed to do," says Smith, who is a member of Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU). "And of course in all workplaces nobody follows them because you cannot do the job following their instructions. Production just falls apart following their directions. Working in the workplace you know best how to do the job and get it done as close to within their methods as possible and still get out some sort of reasonable production.

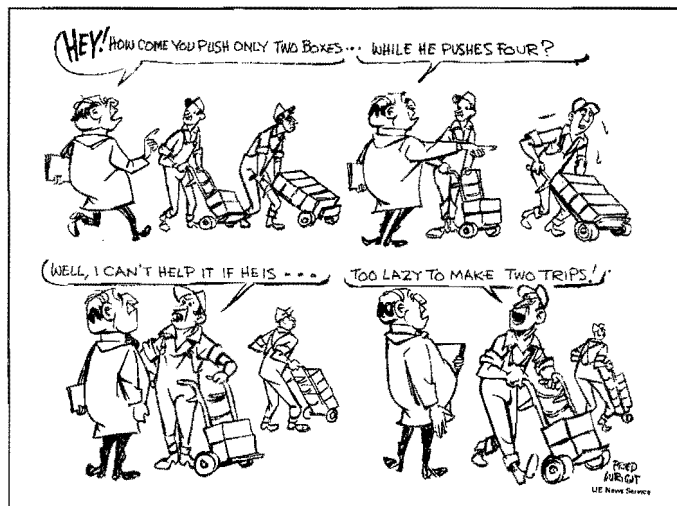
"On MAD days we just follow their rules to the letter. UPS has got so many methods you cannot remember them all. Managers themselves cannot remember all of the methods. The activists know the methods better than anybody, because they're harped on more than anybody else about those methods. So they're catching all these methods from all of these different managers, they're memorizing, they're learning them better than anybody, and then throwing them back at the managers.

"There was an instance where we had a steward placed on indefinite suspension and at UPS that's the same as terminated. We had a MAD day and he was back the next day. This was after we had done MAD days a number of times previously, so they had seen the effects many times before.

"On MAD days we hold a parking lot meeting

where we stress that drivers should follow the company's methods to the letter—both the very restrictive and the safety-oriented practices. We stress that drivers should not work off the clock before their normal starting time, should take their full lunch, always walk to and from the package car [truck], and use proper lifting techniques."

In order to avoid accusations that they are or-



ganizing a slowdown, the TDUs stress that they only follow UPS rules and take nothing additional from the company. At one point the company retaliated against MAD days by issuing warning letters and suspensions, charging the stewards with encouraging a slowdown. Smith went to the NLRB, charging UPS with interfering with union activity. The Board upheld the stewards. "Because we were out in the open and had so many witnesses to disprove UPS's accusations, their charge of a slowdown went nowhere," says Smith.

"Our MAD days have a noticeable effect. According to information the company gave the NLRB, we cut them by a stop per hour on the road.

"But the biggest thing, not just on MAD day but all the time, is the steward has to set an example. You can show that *you're* not working off the clock, you're taking your lunch, and you're still working there. I often run as high as one-and-a-half hours over company standards, where somebody else will run two-and-a-half under. But my methods are perfect."

Quality Control Program

Dock workers in Barstow, California carried out a similar campaign and got rid of a tyrannical terminal manager. Scott Askey works at the Yellow Freight terminal and is a member of TDU. "He abused our seniority rights," says Askey, "and he was abusing us as people. He had quite a number of sexual harassment charges filed against him. And he was alleged to be skimming money."

The workers went to their union, Teamster Local 63, and "the local told us that if we had the guts to do something about getting rid of him, they would back us up.

"We called it a quality control program," says

Askey. "People paid particular attention to all work rules; they did the best professional job that they could do as far as taping boxes that were broken open, adding plywood and cardboard to help secure a load, to make the load ride better, and also to protect the other freight from being damaged. Basically everybody took extra pride in their job—which in turn meant it took longer to do it.

"The quality control program ran almost 50 days. We brought Barstow to their attention, because the company deals in facts and figures, and the production in Barstow had dropped drastically and had stayed dropped for 47, 48 days.

"Yellow Freight in Kansas City came down; they fired the terminal manager and his second in command. They didn't even transfer them to another terminal. It was a real victory. It brought unity to the High Desert here where a lot of people weren't aware what unionism really was."

A variant of the work-to-rule is the refusal to do out-of-title work, work which is not included in the job description or the contract. Nurses in Boston City Hospital have found this to be a good way to put pressure on management.

"We don't have the right to strike in Massachusetts," explains Enid Eckstein, a staffer for SEIU Local 285, "but we've been able to wage fairly militant on-the-job fights by refusal to do non-nursing functions. We don't take the garbage out, we don't answer the phone, we don't move beds, we don't deliver food to our patients. I saw one study that said that 74 percent of a registered nurse's time is spent in non-nursing work, so they've got a lot of power there."

Follow Stupid Rules

Sometimes when management institutes new rules without having thought out the consequences, following the rules can show that they are stupid, so stupid that they have to be withdrawn. Teamster business agent Joe Fahey tells what happened in a frozen food plant in Watsonville, California.

"The women stand on the production line cutting cauliflower and broccoli, and nature calls every once in a while and they go off to the bathroom. Well, some go-getter in the company has this great idea: 'We've got to stop all these people going off the line to go to the bathroom. It's hurting production.'

"So he stationed a floorlady (which is like a foreman) by the bathroom—full-time, all day. She is standing there with a clipboard, and when you went to the bathroom you had to give her your name and your work number, and then she had a stopwatch and she timed how long you were in the bathroom.

"I was at the company one day when the women came off the floor and about 50 women gathered around me and said, what are you going to do about it? I said, how many are there working on the shift? They said, about 200. And I said, how many toilets are there? They said, about six. I said, what is it that the company is telling you to do? They said, they want us go on our breaks and lunch. And how long is your

break? About ten minutes. So I said, Well, I think you should try it. Tomorrow everybody should wait until their break.

"That day is still one of the nicest moments of my four years being a full-time union rep. The company had gotten the word that something was going to happen. Here is this guy who started this policy, the vice-president of production, standing by the bathroom. All of a sudden the belt stops, and I look over and I see this line of women marching down and they've got smiles from ear to ear, 200 of them. And they just line up, to wait their turn on the ten-minute break for the bathroom, because that's what the company wants them to do.

"So that's the end of the floorlady with the clipboard and the stopwatch. But more than that, it built the union. People felt that they could do something, they didn't have to wait for me or somebody else to come in and fix it."

Slowdowns

Most work-to-rule campaigns have the effect of slowing down production, but a slowdown may go even further, since it does not take strict adherence to the rules as its limit. Slowdowns may lead to individual workers being disciplined, to groups of workers being fired, or to entire workforces being locked out. Management's harsh discipline is a testament to the effectiveness of the slowdown.

Tim Costello has been a truck driver for 20 some years. Several years ago he drove a tank truck for Metropolitan Petroleum in Boston.

"We would have specific beefs that the union wouldn't deal with," says Costello, "and we were quite successful in forming counter-organizations almost, sort of ad hoc. We would call them 'drivers committees.' We would pull slowdowns and we would negotiate sort of secretly with management by posting demands.

"One time we caught them at the coldest time of the year. We had three or four beefs that the union wasn't moving on, and these were really things that could be solved. We had a big meeting across the street, and we typed up a list of grievances and we posted them at management's door at night. We signed it 'The Drivers Committee' and everybody was in on it. And then we slowed down gradually. We set a rate and we stuck to it. We did things like that several times."

Costello says that in organizing a slowdown you have to be sensitive to the workers involved. "First of all, you can't be too hard on them. You have to understand that people do work at different paces, and some people are more nervous than others. When you go for a slowdown you have to be realistic in what you're going to slow down to, and have no recriminations if someone is put on the spot and might have to break it a little; that's part of it. Getting everybody to do it, that's the thing.

"One of the things that helps us is we don't have a set rate. In the oil we only had a tradition that said

we would do an honest, fair day's work for a fair day's pay. So the idea of nabbing you for a slow day was very difficult.

"That's the other thing about a slowdown: it's very important that you work, you must work. You can't go hide behind the doughnut shop. Between us we understood that ordinarily you did twenty residential deliveries and four tank loads. So we just cut back, say, to sixteen and three. It worked real well."

Linda Mendez, who worked at Excel Corp.'s beef processing plant in Fort Morgan, Colorado, tells how women there resisted speedup with a slowdown. "In that department there's six people," says Mendez, "kind of an assembly line-type production. They're killing 250 head an hour. Guts come down from the kill floor through a chute into a tank. They pull the guts out of the tank, separate them, lay them out on the tables and cut them at certain lengths. Then they're tied, packaged and weighed. They have two people working over the tanks, two people that are laying, and two that are weighing.

"They have to work together as a team. If one slows down the others have to drop back and help her, it's common sense. But this supervisor was putting them against each other, telling them not to help. 'It doesn't matter what's going on, you will have to handle your job by yourself in this certain amount of time.' The supervisor was standing over them with a stopwatch to see who was faster. But they were going to take two people away, when they were barely handling it with six.

"These girls finally said, 'The hell with this. They're going to take two people away, no way we can handle this.' So they got together and decided to work a little bit slower, especially when she was timing them. So by the end of the day there was a mess, and the company ended up having to pay overtime.

"It took two weeks. The girls would do okay until she would pull up with a stopwatch. Every single time she would show up with a stopwatch they would end up working half an hour to an hour overtime. This was killing the company—they were putting on this efficiency drive and they had this overtime. The people were working, what could be the matter? Their slowness didn't show.

"The result was they stopped timing them and the supervisor got transferred out to another department."

Limiting Work Time

No free overtime. Many companies and public agencies are able to make employees feel obligated to work off the clock. Paul Krissel of the Pennsylvania Social Services Union says that his union has had a problem with "management intimidating employees into working through their breaks and lunch and maybe taking some work home.

"So we set up some mutual support groups and do a modified work to rule campaign where we say seven-and-a-half hours work for seven-and-a-half hours pay, and give people the moral support they

need to carry through that campaign without feeling they will get disciplined."

Sick-outs. Sick-outs are particularly common among public employees who by law are not permitted to engage in job actions or to strike, especially federal employees and members of uniformed services. Police officers or firefighters sometimes collectively come down with a case of the "blue flu." A sick-out is really a strike, but calling it a sick-out can sometimes get you through the law.

Anthony Smith explains how one sick-out among UPS drivers was organized: "There was a time when they were over-staffed and management was letting individuals go home—take an unpaid day off. They should have followed seniority order in letting people go, and they weren't doing that.

"So we organized a 'by-seniority sick-out.' We were assigning people: 'Tomorrow's your day off.' Mondays and Fridays we had two guys off, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday was one guy. We were going to each guy and assigning them.

"They know what to expect from management on the phone, but you go over it with them anyway. Make them think in advance of what they're going to be facing. They're going to give them a ration of crap on the phone about coming in. Management knows what we're doing, but they can't prove it unless somebody cracks.

"All you've got to do is say: 'I don't know. I forget. I don't recall.' It's that easy. You don't make excuses. You don't try and reason things out with them. If a guy is unsure: 'I don't know. I don't know what you're talking about. I forget.' And when you're sick, you're sick, that's it."

Overtime bans. Many industries and services depend upon overtime. Where overtime is voluntary, employees can easily organize such an action. Where overtime is mandatory the organization of such a ban will be more difficult—though it is possible.

Enid Eckstein says that nurses at Boston City

Hospital have used overtime bans as a pressure tactic at contract time.

"Our theory is that you have to impact the census, the hospital's count of occupied beds, which is what they base their business on. We were able to take advantage of the fact that there was an extreme shortage of nurses in both 1986 and 1988.

"Our other theory is, don't get backed up against the wall on your contract expiration. We set the time.

In 1988 the contract expired June 30, but we wanted the financial package on the table way before. So we put in our overtime ban five weeks before the contract expired. We told the city across the table that we were going to do it. So the city started bargaining pretty seriously five weeks before the contract expired.

"We made stickers with the universal ban sign against overtime. We advertised a meeting—something like 'Come vote

on actions designed to win a good contract.'

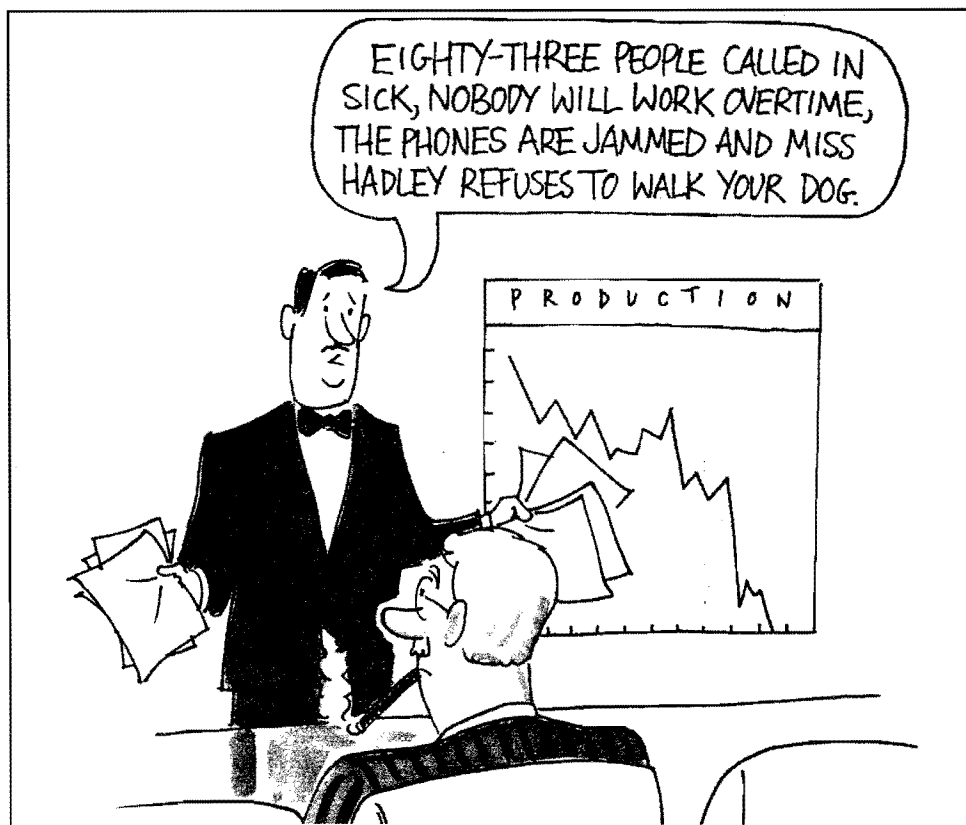
Everybody knew what it was about. We presented management's offer and nobody liked it. So we took a vote of the membership to do a ban.

"We called all the agencies and did an open letter to the agency nurses. We had our nurses on the floor tell any agency nurses that if they worked they were working against the interests of all nurses in the city.

"Our nurses would do only the minimum to orient them. And we were very successful in turning away agency nurses. We were so successful we reduced the census by 40 percent. I'd say the overtime ban was 98% effective.

"Two notes of caution: we do not have mandatory overtime in our contract. And second, we are public sector—we're not under the same restrictions as private sector healthcare workers. For any type of concerted action they have to give 10-day notice to the NLRB."

Eckstein also warns that in any hospital such activities must be planned with great care in order to insure the well-being of the patients.



Helping Individuals Fight Job Overload

Vince Meredith was for many years Teamster Local 89's chief steward at UPS in Louisville, Kentucky. When Meredith became the steward in the mid-1960s he initiated two voluntary funds to help workers finance their fights with management. Each fund was maintained by small voluntary contributions collected in the workplace.

The "employees fund" was used to send stewards to the state grievance panel to argue grievances. (Ordinarily, the union sends neither the steward nor the grievant.) It also paid for pocket-size record books for employees to keep track of their work day. "We make up a record book for each employee," explains Meredith, "to show what he's doing—and so we can prove that he didn't do what the supervisor said he did."

Then the workers started a "termination fund" to help defend workers who were unfairly fired. It pays each fired employee \$250 a week. The idea is that workers are better able to stand up to management harassment, and thus risk being disciplined, if some of the financial sting of disciplinary time off is removed.

These funds managed by the workers themselves gave them some real tools with which to fight the company. More than 20 years later they still function to give the Louisville UPS workers independence in the workplace.

At the General Motors Wentzville, Missouri plant, workers set up a fund to help support anyone who was suspended for fighting job overload. The fund was called the "78 fund."

"Paragraph 78 of the UAW-GM national agreement is the one that deals with a worker having too much to do in the time allotted," explains Peter Downs, who belongs to the New Directions Movement in the UAW. "It gives the procedure for filing a grievance on an overloaded job, and the worker should not be penalized while that 78 grievance is pending. In actual practice, management suspends people up through the steps, one-day suspension, three days, five days, two weeks, a month and then discharge.

"We were facing a situation where management was going to increase line speeds from 68 jobs an hour to 75 and they wanted to do it without adding anyone else to the line. I had heard from one of the older guys that in the 1960's they had had a 78 fund. So I proposed it to some other people in New Directions, and we called a meeting. There were maybe 100 to 150 people who came and decided to create a fund.

"Each person would contribute five dollars per week. The officers of the fund would decide how much to pay out based on the health of the fund, but we would pay the person a certain amount per week as a loan, to help them through this period that they were out on the street. Then when they won their grievance and got back pay for the time they were out, they would reimburse the fund."

The fund was attacked by the other faction in the plant, says Downs, and it never got to be very large.

Nevertheless it did help support several workers who were suspended.

Such a fund can receive recognition from the Internal Revenue Service as a tax-exempt organization. Individuals' contributions to the fund are then tax-deductible.²

Putting It Together

In real life, the tactics discussed above—from ridicule to group grievances to overtime bans—will not be used alone, but in combination with each other, and in combination with other tactics such as use of the media and community support.

The following stories show how workers in three locals used a variety of shop floor tactics to get management's attention and win their issues.

Police Employees Do It By Hand

Ann Cohen, president of AFSCME Local 1637, represents civilian employees of the Philadelphia Police Department. "In 1984 we were in a tremendous battle with the Police Department," she remembers. The union had notified the Environmental Protection Agency that the Department was ordering mechanics to remove catalytic converters from police cars and replace them with straight pipes, which is against federal law. The EPA fined the Police Department some \$327,000 for violations of the Clean Air Act. In retaliation, the Department punished the union members by putting them all on rotating shifts.

"It's a four-platoon shift," explains Cohen, "with rotating shifts against the clock and with rotating days off. Your circadian rhythms say that you should rotate forward, but they go backward in the Police Department.

"So here we are, we had blown the whistle on the Police Department and they retaliated by creating really unhealthful working conditions. So we mounted a many-pronged attack. First, we filed a charge with the Department of Labor, because there is whistleblower protection in the Clean Air Act. And we filed an unfair labor practice charge.

"And then we had weekly meetings with everybody in a big cross-section of the bargaining unit. The people were just fit to be tied, it was turning people's lives completely upside down. So they decided they were going to work to rule.

"They took all their air-powered tools home, and everybody did everything by hand, tightened the lugs by hand. Needless to say, it took a deal of time to do the work. Nobody would let a car out if it didn't really pass muster. Muster all of a sudden became much harder to meet.

"Then we got the families involved, we got petitions and we got wives and children to write to the mayor about how destructive this shift was to family life.

"Last but not least we involved the press. We did press releases and we had a big, big rally on the

Fourth of July to protest what they had done. Our headline was 'Police Department retaliates against whistleblowers.'

"So when the Department of Labor came in and did their investigation, they were really responding to press stories. And the Department of Labor ordered them to put the people back on their former shifts.

"Of course the city appealed it, at which point we turned up the heat more. This shift system was so inef-



ficient that they didn't have enough police cars on the street. Ultimately they capitulated.

"You can't do just one thing. You can't just beat them in arbitration, you've got to be willing to do some other stuff too. By the same token you can't just take a job action and not be willing to back it up with whatever legal avenues are open to you. You've got to be willing to hit them with all of it.

"It was real good for the union. And once you have some big victories, the bosses begin to take you more seriously and you can get results without having to pull out all the stops."

A Fight Over Subcontracting

Dave Slaney works for the Market Forge Company in Boston. Since 1982, while continuing to work on the shop floor he has been president of USWA Local 2431. The union has about 110 members. In 1985 the company began contracting out work.

"There was a lot of concern about subcontracting," says Slaney, "but we didn't have any language about it. We did some Labor Board cases and tried various things, nothing very successful. All this time the company was eliminating people through attrition. Then, the company laid off 19 or 20 people. That's a big layoff at our place, and people were extremely upset about it.

"So we launched an in-shop campaign to do two things: to get the company to rehire those people and to get some kind of job security clause so that nobody

would lose their job because of subcontracting. For the next four-and-a-half months we did a number of things to put constant pressure on the company.

"We put up stickers in the plant. We had Monday morning rallies in the parking lot, inviting in people from other unions to give pep talks, inviting retirees, past union officials to come in and talk to people. And then we would try to march into the shop; it didn't always work, but usually we would then march into the shop together chanting or shouting slogans.

"We also put a ban on overtime, so nobody worked overtime for seven months. That was voted on at a union meeting. There was a lot of dispute about that, as you can imagine. There was a minority of people in the shop who did not like that, but everybody went along with it and we got to the point where if the company needed some emergency maintenance work, if there was a flood or electrical problem, they would come to us and ask for special permission to have somebody work overtime.

"We did that to let the company know there was going to be no business as usual until we resolved these issues. And the company has traditionally depended on overtime. Looking back on it, it was effective. It was also very contentious, and somewhat divisive and an awful lot of trouble. It was a constant problem to keep people in line on that, to keep it from breaking down, but we did it. There were a number of people who lost a lot of money. We had a committee, one person for each ten people, so there was constant communication."

Unhappy with management, people were not very productive. Work in the shop slowed down. "What we said to people was, think of some creative ways to show the company how angry you are. Some people were very creative and aggressive, and some people weren't. But enough people did it that again it was very obvious to the company that it was going on.

"We also bombarded them with grievances on every possible occasion and with Labor Board charges. At the same time we refused to cooperate in any way with them. There was a Christmas lunch and nobody went to the lunch. Nobody. Things like that.

"At the end of four-and-a-half months we had a situation of constant low level guerrilla warfare. The company finally approached us and offered to negotiate some job security language.

"There was some dispute: I and some of the people felt that we should keep fighting to get those laid-off people back. But really people were exhausted and there was no way. But we got language which makes it virtually impossible for the company to lay anybody off, and nobody has been laid off since then."

Packinghouse Workers Build Shop Floor Organization

During the last half of the 1980s a group of packinghouse workers at the Iowa Pork plant in South St. Paul, Minnesota built a remarkable shop floor or-

ganization. What is most remarkable about this organization is that it was built after an eleven-month strike and a nine-month layoff, the imposition of a two-tier wage system which left 40 percent of the workforce in the bottom tier, and the elimination of the workers' local union (they were forced into a large retail clerks local, UFCW Local 789).

Unlike many of the stories in this book, this one does not have a happy ending. The plant was eventually closed when, as former steward Bud Schulte put it, "the owner decided that it was time to take the money and run." Let's let Bud Schulte do the talking:

"Our biggest problem was the influx of new employees and their attitude about the union. We had all of these people under this two-tier, working right next to us making a couple of dollars less. Plus we wanted to change some of the working conditions. Plus we had a very belligerent management staff. They actually told us we were shit, before the strike. Were they going to be able to talk to us that way after the strike? We didn't think so.

"So we came up with the idea to have some meetings in the plant. This was my first suggestion as steward.

Frank Discussions With the New Members

"These are really physically demanding jobs, and you have to get there almost an hour early to get your equipment ready. You've got a couple of stones, sharpening stones which have to be kept clean and nice and flat so you can use them to rub your knives up. You've probably got two or three knives. And then you've got a steel, which is a piece of hardened round steel that you use to run your knife across to keep your edge up during the day.

"And all of these things have got to be kept in shape or they don't work. You've got to rub up your steel until you've got the right kind of finish on it. You've got to make sure it's magnetized. All of this stuff has got to be kept clean. Your knife has to be ground in order to put a feather-edge on it, hollow ground on a whetstone. Most of us who have worked in packing plants before don't trust others to do our knife work for us. We have our own way of sharpening it and that's the way we like it. So you have to get there early. You've got to put rubber boots on, you've got to put your work clothes on, because you're going to be covered with blood, piss and shit. So you've got a lot of preparation to do, and you don't get paid for this.

"So I figure, well, as long as people do come in early, maybe it's possible to get them together in the cafeteria and talk about what's going on here in the plant, talk about why we went on strike with these new hires. So my first act as steward was to propose that we all get together for coffee up in the cafeteria. If you've got any problems, you have any questions about working here and what the union's role is and what happened during the strike, come on up to the cafeteria in the morning, and anything you want to talk about, you can raise.

"To my surprise, at the first meeting about 40

people showed up, out of about 85 on the kill floor. Some of these new hires asked some good questions.

"We talked about how we were economically beaten into accepting this two-tier contract. We told them that we fought against it for eleven months, that us old-timers weren't out to get them. The company was dipping into their pockets.

"During the course of this meeting a couple of the management people walked through the cafeteria and were absolutely stunned by what was going on. It was fortunate that we had 40 people there, because it was a large enough crowd to intimidate them. So they called me into the office, the big wheel's office, and asked me what I was doing. They got all upset and told me to never do that again. I said, 'I won't ever, ever have a meeting in the cafeteria.' Two weeks later we had another one and this turned out about 70 people.

"I used this meeting to ask, Does anybody have anything to grieve, anything that's timely? What's going on? What are we going to do for the next union meeting? How are we going to organize to get this business rep to come in and see us? Everything you could deal with in the shop floor we dealt with at these meetings. It was also a way of showing some resistance to the management.

"The kill floor superintendent came into the meeting, and I was standing in front of the group up on my chair, answering a question. He said, 'What in the hell do you think you're doing?' He was talking to me, I guess, he was looking in my direction, but he didn't mention my name so I didn't answer him. And we kept right on talking, as if he never existed. He had no business there anyway.

"So he said something else, and I kind of looked like I was bothered, and I said, 'You want something? Are you talking to me?' And he said, 'You can't do this.' I said, 'You want to join in the conversation? Pull up a chair and sit down. All we've got to say here directly concerns you anyway, so if you want to sit down here, go ahead. But,' I says, 'as far as stopping—I look at my watch here—I don't start till 8 o'clock, and you haven't got a damned thing to say to me till 8 o'clock.'

"He went right off the deep end. Turned red, beat the feet right out the door saying, 'I'm going to get you.' And everybody laughed, it was pretty funny. And that was it, from then on those meetings were untouchable.

Discussing Racism in the Morning Meetings

"How did I raise racism? Very directly. You don't beat about the bush with packinghouse workers. I said, 'Look, here's what happened during the strike. We learned about how to deal with each other. About what we are here inside the plant, where we work together or we don't work at all.

"People understood that during the strike 70 percent of the people that went across were Black. We talked about why that happened. Who do you think provoked that? Did the company actively recruit in the Black community in order to make this an issue? Yes, of course.

"I told them what happened before the strike was that everybody would kiss the boss's ass until their nose bled, thinking they were going to get a favor, and never got anything out of it. I said, now look at what's been going on here for the last two months. When we work together as a unit, look what we've accomplished. And we had a list of things we could point to. We had changed some actual operations on the kill floor.

"I said, We don't want a situation like we had during the strike, where we let them tell us who's our friend and who's our enemy, just because of the color of our skin. When you walk through the plant gate in the morning, if you have any prejudices, you better set them aside, because there's no room for them here. Here we all do the same thing, we all work our asses off, and it doesn't make any difference who you are or what you look like. And if we don't work together, we don't have anything. So it became a non-problem after a while. It was one of our strengths.

"We forced them to change their policy. We sent in Black people that we knew for job interviews. They got turned down and somebody else would be hired, so we started writing letters to the editor, and made some public statements about the fact that the plant was 70 percent Black during the strike. This is an equal opportunity employer? Why don't we hire Black people when times are good?

Shear Solidarity

"And then we moved on from there to what was happening in the rest of the industry. About that time Patrick Cudahy went on strike, in Cudahy, Wisconsin. Then we noticed we were getting new boxes in for some of our pork products, our loins and ribs. This looked to us like Cudahy work. That became an issue in these meetings. Then funny things started to happen. Ink would drop into these boxes. Nuts and bolts fell in there. All kinds of things happened to these boxes of meat. You like to bite into a bolt when you're having dinner? I don't think so.

"So then the management got kind of concerned and said, What are you doing here? We could fire the whole works of you and get rid of you all. So then we had to explain to them that they tried to manage the plant, but we actually ran the plant.

"We had a fight about whether you could put a sticker on your helmet. As long as you keep your helmet clean, that's what the USDA [U.S. Department of Agriculture] says. But the company implied they were going to fire you if you put a sticker on your helmet. We tried to convince them that they weren't going to kill as many hogs as they normally killed if they kept harassing us about these stickers.

"So we pulled a couple of work stoppages on them. The hogs move through the plant pulled by chains. The chains are driven by big pulleys, and on the drive mechanism of these pulleys there's a pin made out of brass or something that's soft, and if the chain gets bound up and too much pressure is put on this pulley, rather than break the chain, the pulley,

and the whole thing, the shear pin snaps. See, there are ways that we all knew of putting a little extra pressure on a chain that will snap these shear pins. Usually you snap one a week. But when 30 of them go in a day, these guys get really excited.

"So when the chain stops we get a break, and then you see these foremen running around like they got scalded. They're just screaming, 'What the hell is going on? Get the thing going!' And we get to laugh at that too, so it's not only restful but amusing.

"We didn't overtly say a lot of this stuff in these meetings. We would just say, How would you like to be amused and get a couple of rest periods today? Everybody says, Yeah, I think we deserve them, we've been working really hard here. And did you hear what happened? They threatened to fire this guy because he had a sticker on his helmet. Stand up and tell us about that. Oh, they said they were going to fire you? What do you guys think of that?

"Don't get me wrong, we had women too, women were about 15 percent and they were some of the most adamant. I would say they were among the more active.

"During this time an important thing happened—the first two grievances that we filed came to arbitration. There was a decision to be made about whether to arbitrate these grievances or not. We showed up at a couple of the union meetings and made it clear that we weren't going to stand going this far down the road and have some idiot bureaucrat toss it out.

"After we won the two grievances the plant manager was fired and replaced by the old kill floor superintendent who himself was a past union president, so he was someone we could actually work with a lot more.

Changing the Jobs

"Finally we got to a point where we were actually changing some of the jobs on the kill floor. The injury rate was phenomenal. So we established a safety committee and changed some of the jobs around to try to prevent carpal tunnel.

"Meatcutting is a job that takes a lot of little skills. Primarily you have to know how to sharpen a knife. If you take someone who doesn't know how to sharpen a knife and put them out on the job, you're subjecting them to a lot of wrist strains and hand problems. The company, when they hired new people, would never train them. So one of the things we did was to get a knife-sharpening seminar on company time.

"We also met with the foremen, and subsequently the plant manager got involved, to have them move the equipment into positions where it was easier for us to do the work. We had to pull a few slowdowns and we had to make things go kind of rough there for a while in order to get some of these things done.

"Sterilizers on the brisket saw, for example. The sterilizer was placed off to the right-hand side of the person and behind them, so every time they made a

cut they had to move their body all the way around, dip the saw in the sterilizer and then come back and do the next cut on the next hog. You were turning your wrists constantly, bending body, back, shoulder and wrist. We had them move the sterilizer out to the front of the ramp where the guy stood to do the job, so he just had to make a cut and dip the saw right there. It made the job much easier.

"Another example was the spreader-hook system. Normally they had no equipment to do this job. Somebody was just reaching and handing a forty-pound set of hooks to the guy who was going to put them back in. It's an unbelievably tough job to do for eight or ten hours a day. We were involved in designing a primitive but effective system of passing the hooks back and forth, a slide-type bar-conveyor.

"They just wanted to leave everything where it was and you work around the equipment. We knew what it took to do the job.

"Like I told you before, our biggest hurdle in dealing with management was to convince them that they tried to manage the plant, but we in reality ran it. We turned the wheels there. So in that sense who really had the power? We did, and once we convinced ourselves of that, it was a different ball game. We were able to change some things and make some progress.

"I really miss those times in the plant myself. I felt most alive when I was going toe to toe with those superintendents or foremen. It was a point in my life that really changed a lot of my thinking."

Action Questions

1. What happens when you file a grievance where you work? Does every worker file a grievance every time management violates the contract? Does the union take up all the grievances workers bring to its attention? How long does the entire process take? What percentage of grievances does the union win? Does the union organize any action to support grievances?

2. What is a common problem or grievance in your workplace? How many workers does it affect?

3. Who is the supervisor with the power to do something about that issue? How could the issue be brought to his or her attention?

4. How would you word a petition about this grievance? Where would you go to get the first bunch of signatures? To whom would you present the petition? The union? The company? Both?

5. What group would sign a group grievance? Would that group also take it to the boss? Would you do it on your break or during worktime (affecting production)?

6. Would it be appropriate to use a "work-to-rule" campaign to deal with the issue? What rules would you use? The company manual? The union contract? Health and safety regulations? Other government regulations? What would be the key rule to enforce?

7. In some work-to-rule campaigns, one group of workers, or even one worker, can be key. Make a

drawing of the work process showing how your product or service moves through your workplace. Where is the key place to create a bottleneck? Who would be the key workers?

8. Who should give the signal to begin a work-to-rule campaign, and who to end it? How can that be done discreetly, if necessary?

9. Would it be appropriate to use a slowdown? Where is the key place to create a bottleneck? Should you set an (informal) numerical goal for how much you want to slow production?

10. Who would be the key workers in a slowdown? Are there weak links among the membership? Who should talk to them? Who should give the signal to begin the slowdown, and who to end it? How can that be done discreetly?

11. Are there people in your workplace who "donate" time by beginning early, working through breaks or lunch, or working late? Does it create expectations for other workers to do the same? What action could be taken to stop the practice?

12. Are your members often disciplined with unpaid time off when they try to protest speedup or unfairness? Does the fear of losing money keep people from standing up for themselves? Would it help to create a workers' fund to aid those who have been disciplined for defending job standards?

13. Is there a boss whose behavior is outrageous and who should be shown up for the fool that he is? How does that person act, how does he treat others? Does that give you any ideas about how to make fun of him?

14. Would a mass withdrawal from United Way put pressure on management? How could you publicize such an action?

15. If you were all going to do something to show management that you are united and want a change, what would you do? Would you all wear a button saying the same thing? All wear the same color on the same day? All march into the office together? Would you all march out of the shop at breaktime and have a "solidarity break"? Would you all stand on your chairs and sing "Solidarity"? What is the appropriate level of action for where your people are right now?

Notes

1. Legal Note: There are no reported NLRB decisions on employer discipline for "working to rule." But there are plenty of NLRB decisions on partial strikes, intermittent strikes, refusals to work scheduled overtime, and slowdowns. They are legally indistinguishable from ordinary strikes (which should be protected by the law), except that, in the NLRB's view, they involve unprotected means.

To explain the same concept of protected ends and unprotected means in another way: striking for a new contract is protected under the law. When the strike is over, the company cannot legally discriminate against the strikers or their leaders, and everyone must be allowed back to work (or placed on a hiring list if they have been permanently replaced). But suppose a few workers are caught engaging in severe violence. Those who engaged in the violence can be fired. This is because they had a protected end but used an unprotected means. *NLRB v Thayer Co*, 213 F2d 748, 34

LRRM 2250 (CA1, 1954), cert denied, 348 US 883 (1954).

The NLRB reasons that, like violence, partial strikes, intermittent strikes, refusals to work scheduled overtime, and slowdowns are indefensible means. It feels the law shouldn't protect workers who draw pay, unilaterally set terms of employment, and obtain the bargaining benefit of a strike all at the same time. Accordingly, participants are unprotected. *Elk Lumber Co*, 91 NLRB 333, 26 LRRM 1493 (1950) (slowdown); *Valley City Furniture Co*, 110 NLRB 1589, 35 LRRM 1265 (1954), enf'd 230 F2d 947, 37 LRRM 2740 (CA6, 1956) (refusal to work overtime); *Honolulu Rapid Transit Co*, 110 NLRB 1806, 35 LRRM 1305 (1954) (weekend strikes); *Pacific Telephone & Telegraph Co*, 107 NLRB 1547, 33 LRRM 1433 (1954) (pattern of intermittent strikes).

Participants are at greater risk where there is a contract with a no-strike clause. *NLRB v Sands Mfg Co*, 306 US 332, 59 S Ct 508, 4 LRRM 530 (1939).

Though there are no NLRB decisions on working to rule, there are indications that working to rule would be protected. It is different from other slowdowns because it is a legitimate worker response to conflicting management expectations.

For instance, concerted refusals to work voluntary overtime are treated like a worker's refusal to cross a picket line at his or her company; such employees take on the status of strikers and may be replaced but not fired. *Prince Lithograph Co*, 205 NLRB 110, 83 LRRM 1654 (1973); *Dow Chemical Co*, 152 NLRB 1150, 59 LRRM 1279 (1965). Courts have also recognized the historic interest of workers and unions in limiting production for workers paid by piecework; a union does not violate the law or the contract by fining its members who overwork, and suing those who don't pay. *Scofield v NLRB*, 394 US 423, 89 S Ct 1154, 70 LRRM 3105 (1969). Further, unprotected slowdowns are not illegal bad-faith union bargaining tactics. *NLRB v Insurance Agents Union*, 361 US 477, 80 S Ct 419, 45 LRRM 2704 (1960); *Teamsters Local 741*, 170 NLRB 61, 67 LRRM 1467 (1968).

The foregoing law applies if there is no contract in effect

or if the contract does not contain a no-strike clause. But during the contract the grievance procedure applies instead of the law. Grievance procedures in general protect working to rule to the same limited extent that the law protects it. But it depends on the particular contract and the particular arbitrator.

The General Motors-UAW contract, for instance, specifies that certain overtime is voluntary on an individual basis, but concerted refusals of overtime can be disciplined. Agreement between GMC and UAW, Memorandum of Understanding on Overtime, Section 11 (1987-90). Arbitrators at other companies have held that slowdowns to the "standard" production rate are protected if done individually or to make work easier, but not if done as a group or to extract a concession from management. *Manville Corp*, 89 LA 880 (Ross, 1987); *Fitchburg Paper Co*, 47 LA 349, 353 (Wallen, 1966); *Pratt & Whitney*, 53 LA 69, 71-72 (Feinberg, 1969).

Working to rule can be an effective pressure tactic for bargaining on contracts or grievances. True, management can always change the game by changing ambiguous instructions to clear ones, or by giving a direct order to do something in a certain way or at a certain speed. In that case, if workers want to avoid risk they should "obey now and grieve later." But it might be embarrassing, impractical, or illegal for the company to give such an order. It would thereby admit that an unwritten practice—say one which affects its accounting or its relations with customers—goes on with its knowledge.

Even if the worker action is legally unprotected, it would become protected if the employer settles with a promise of no reprisals. *Richardson Paint Co v NLRB*, 574 F2d 1195, 98 LRRM 2951 (CA5, 1978).

2. These employee funds are "labor organizations" under the tax law though not under labor law. Their tax-exempt status is 501(c)(5), just as a union's is. Contributors can write off their donations as a business expense in the same way they write off their regular union dues, and the fund does not have to pay taxes on any interest it earns.



Steward's Corner — August 1984

Mass Action Backs Up Stewards On Grievances

by Gene Bruskin

Our local keeps the company on the defense by fighting many grievances with direct action, membership involvement, group stewarding, and an uncompromising demand for respect.

USWA Local 8751 represents 550 school bus drivers working for a large conglomerate (ARA Services) under contract with the City of Boston. Our workforce is divided between three geographically separate yards and our contract calls for one working steward per 25 drivers.

The \$25 Breakfast Grievance

Our first important grievance was over unpaid Christmas bonuses. Company/union meetings went nowhere and a rank and file \$25 Bonus Committee was formed to come up with a strategy.

A meeting between the company and union officers was set at a conference room that the union

knew had a connecting door to a public cafeteria. Meanwhile, drivers were invited to a "\$25 Breakfast" at the cafeteria without the company's knowledge. When the company showed up for the 10:30 a.m. meeting, the large room was filled with coffee-drinking drivers having a relaxing breakfast after their morning runs. A couple of hours worth of company backsliding and driver speakouts later, the coffee was still flowing although the time for the afternoon school pickups was close at hand. The company folded.

We have continued to find that relying on paperwork and argumentation to win grievances does not do the trick. For one thing, written grievances have often simply not been enough to stem the pile-up of driver complaints and problems. In addition, having working stewards means we have a hard time staying on top of the paperwork when the company gets uncooperative. Even when written grievances are effective

tive they can tend to breed passivity by removing the members from an active role in the process.

Open Meetings

ARA has presented the union with a revolving door of general managers, each determined to prove their control. One effective tactic when grievances pile up is the "open meeting with the general manager." Naturally, the company is usually not in favor of such meetings and the union has to be very creative in making them happen.

Sometimes we show up for an after-work company/union meeting with dozens of rank and file drivers. Sometimes we send an uninvited delegation to the central office to bring the general manager to an assemblage of angry drivers. Management generally has a hard time ignoring a large group of drivers when presented with them in the flesh, although they can easily ignore them when tucked away comfortably in their office cubbyholes. During the meetings the drivers get a genuine sense of empowerment by speaking their piece directly to the boss with the support of their fellow workers.

Once we wrote an open letter to the general manager detailing the violations the drivers wanted corrected. A copy was sent to every driver, company headquarters in Philadelphia, the media, and a number of city and school officials, as well as the schoolchildren's parents. For safekeeping we even made up some informational picket signs. When the open meeting finally occurred, the general manager quickly conceded to most of our complaints.

On a daily basis, of course, such actions are not

possible because of the tremendous amount of organizing necessary to pull them off. To keep up the pressure we try to have our stewards meet with management in groups, trying to offset by numbers the enormous advantage of power and resources the company has.

Stewards Handling Arbitrations

Our stewards argue arbitration cases themselves. This has been a very successful policy. Initially, a group of us was trained by labor lawyers and since then we have trained each other. Stewards plan cases in pairs or groups, often with legal consultation. When necessary a lawyer is available during the hearing and, in some cases, the lawyer or International Rep may be asked to argue the case prepared by the stewards.

This policy gives the stewards a feeling of control over the grievance from the bottom up. The effect on the company when its lawyer is defeated by a worker in a formal hearing is, needless to say, devastating. Although it is an enormously time-consuming procedure, it saves substantially on legal fees and has been well worth the effort.

Running a union this way is far from easy. Like everyone else we face discouragement, apathy, infighting and various forms of inefficiency. But direct action as a method of resolving grievances needs to receive more consideration as one way to help "put the movement back into the labor movement."

[At the time this article appeared in *Labor Notes*, Gene Bruskin was a steward in USWA Local 8751. Today he is an organizer for the Mail Handlers Union.

[For more on Local 8751's militant tactics, see Chapter 10.]



Steward's Corner — November 1987

On-the-Job Actions Keep Union Alive on the Shop Floor

by Seth Rosen

Over the past 10 years CWA Local 4309 in Cleveland has used a variety of on-the-job tactics to win issues of concern to our members, 2,000 clerical, customer service, and data/computer workers in the telephone industry. Here are five points we've found to be important:

1. Organize Around Issues

Members are not willing to take action for its own sake. The issue should have a specific goal in mind, and it's nice if it's a winnable goal.

For example, we were not very successful when we tried to organize a slowdown during a 1979 CWA National Job Pressures Day. We were much more effective in 1985, when Ohio Bell had lower-title workers doing work usually done by service reps. These lower-title workers were following instructions out of a book. In response we organized an "Ohio Bell Wants It by the Book" campaign. We explained to our

members that the company evidently did not value our knowledge nor the short-cuts we took on the job. Therefore we should stop using our knowledge and work by the book, so management would understand the issue better. That action, combined with other tactics including a two-day walkout, enabled us to win a partial victory.

2. Make It Meaningful to Members

Often, officers or stewards see an issue as important but it does not seem important to the members. We have found ways to connect the issue with matters important to them.

For example, we wanted to have an overtime boycott around an issue that affected only 500 of our 1,500 members at Ohio Bell. Our stewards were able to convince our other members that they could use the boycott to send a message to management on other issues that concerned them. This not only got those

members to give up \$600 each in overtime, but it did, in fact, allow us to resolve some of their issues.

3. Build the Union

An effective tactic builds the union by encouraging membership participation *now and in the future*. To do this the tactic needs to have the support of the majority of members and contain no more risks than members are willing to accept. Ideally the members will have a say in the choice of tactics so they'll be aware of the risk.

However, on-the-job tactics will often have to be sustained for a period of time, so after a few weeks the risks may look different. Also, the risks look different to members in retrospect if you lose.

At Ameritech Publishing (the Yellow Pages company), management increased production quotas during bargaining. Members wanted to walk out. We felt management was trying to provoke a walkout and instead encouraged members to refuse to submit their work tallies—used to measure production—at the end of each day. The members agreed.

Management responded by threatening to suspend the entire 150-member work group. Everyone stuck together and all were suspended. The members decided that since the suspensions were unfair, they would go back to work, do their jobs and refuse to leave. Management couldn't believe it. The issue was discussed at the bargaining table with some success.

However, the members were not paid for the day they worked. Even though they had been prepared to walk out and lose pay, they still, over a year later, feel bitter towards the union for working a day without pay. This tactic, while effective in the short run, probably was not a union-building action.

4. Put Pressure on Management

Effective on-the-job tactics put pressure on management by disrupting day-to-day operations. Remember: they have a business to run and we don't! Often these tactics take time and require much patience. They can work if they are sustained.

In January 1987, Ohio Bell discontinued an employee discount on certain residential services. Not only did this cost our members money, but retirees

who previously got free phone service now had to pay a small monthly fee. When retirees called our members in the residential service office to complain, we had our members direct them to the company benefit office, which is staffed by management employees. Lo and behold, the company soon reversed itself.

In another instance, management imposed new and arbitrary sales quotas on the service reps, which resulted in eleven members being disciplined. We held a meeting before work one morning where members agreed to try a variety of things, from boycotting a management pizza lunch to slowing down. Almost immediately, the eleven members were removed from discipline. In both examples, these tactics were effective because they disrupted the normal flow of business.

5. Have Fun

The best on-the-job tactics are enjoyable and unifying experiences regardless of the outcome. If members get together and feel they put one over on the boss it can be useful even if you don't win the issue.

In August 1986, our contract with Ohio Bell had expired and was being extended on a day-to-day basis. Some members were upset to find that their boss was training management personnel on their jobs, performing real bargaining unit work. Management said it was a training seminar.

So these members decided to hold a training session of their own. On their off hours they practiced picketing a 24-hour location. First they used blank signs. Then they added ones that read "Just Practicing." They practiced so well that they turned away delivery trucks. We don't know what effect this had on negotiations, but the members had a ball.

Often, instead of filing a single group grievance, our stewards will file individual grievances for each employee. They'll force management to sit through hundreds of grievance meetings where they will tell that particular employee's life story, hopefully for several hours at a time. Again, this may or may not win the issue, but everyone loves it because they've kept the boss off the floor for days on end.

[At the time this article appeared in *Labor Notes*, Seth Rosen was Local Director of Communications Workers Local 4309. He is now District Organizer in CWA District 4.]



Steward's Corner — October 1984

Challenge to Automation Begins on the Shop Floor

by Al Hart

American industry's current rush to automate labor out of existence throws the union movement's long-cherished beliefs and strategies out the window. For four or five decades (at least) we have ignored the most basic questions about the system; now they are staring us in the face: Who defines "progress"? Is

rising productivity good for everyone? Who should run industry, and for what purpose?

Shop stewards are the people best situated to begin challenging the company's automation plans.

Our local recently adopted a set of Stewards' Guidelines on Automation, which we are using for

steward training and as a basis for discussion throughout the plant.

Stewards' Guidelines

1. Demand to know what new equipment is coming into your department, well before it gets there.

2. Ask who will run the new equipment. At what rate? How will it affect earnings? Will it result in increased output per worker? Will jobs be eliminated?

3. Demand increased rates for increased responsibilities. Don't accept the company's usual line that the skill requirement is less. With automated equipment, worker responsibility often increases, but the company tries to avoid paying for it.

4. Don't accept job combinations, such as giving a worker additional machines to tend. Fight to save every job you can save.

5. Don't let outsiders or management do work that belongs to our union. Once a machine is in place, all the operations, maintenance, and programming should be done by union members.

6. Demand that the company be specific about the duties of a job involving new equipment. This will help get the best rate on the job and will be very helpful in the future if the company tries to pile additional duties onto the worker.

7. Don't sit still for the work duties of salaried workers being transferred to hourly workers—or vice versa. The company is trying to phase out many dispatchers and other salaried workers by gradually unloading their work onto someone else. We must all join together to stop this.

8. Keep your members up to date on what's going on in your area. Explain to them how jobs may be in jeopardy, and how we must act now, before it's too late. Organize your department to put pressure on the boss when he refuses to give you information or make changes in his plans.

9. Your chief steward and union officers need to be kept up to date on new automation in your department.

These guidelines draw on specific successes some of our stewards have achieved by mobilizing the members.

For example, about four years ago the company introduced a welding robot with no advance notice. There was no job loss involved and the company agreed to pay the workers who ran the robot one step higher than the other welders. But management insisted that "a vendor" would be doing the maintenance. The steward, on the other hand, insisted that a Local 506 maintenance worker would be present during *all* maintenance on the robot, "even if he's just handing screwdrivers to the other guy."

Welding Unity

The steward began holding noontime meetings of his entire department. He got the welders to confront the foreman and any other manager who walked through the area.

Meanwhile, the maintenance workers were also agitating, repeatedly complaining to their boss. The steward and chief steward kept meeting with management, hammering away with the demand that union members do the work.

Finally, the company relented and agreed to train union maintenance workers to service the robot.

As a step toward developing broader strategies, my local hosted a conference on automation for electrical workers from several unions. The need to conduct shop floor struggles *now* over each piece of automated equipment was a major theme of the discussion.

[At the time this article appeared in *Labor Notes*, Al Hart was a steward and executive board member in United Electrical Workers (UE) Local 506 at the Erie, Pa. General Electric plant. He is now an organizer for the UE.]



Steward's Corner — September 1988

Full-Time Union Reps: Are They Alienating the Membership?

by John D. Clout

In theory, full-time union representation in the workplace seems like a good thing. But is it accomplishing what it was negotiated for? I have worked at General Motors in St. Catharines, Ontario for 25 years. In 1980 I was elected plant chairman, representing approximately 8,500 workers at five plants in three different locations.

In addition to a full-time chairman, the local negotiating committee has nine full-time committeemen. We also have about 30 zone committeemen, most of whom are full-time. In addition, there are a number of full-time benefit representatives. The committeemen and benefits representatives have offices with phones in the plant.

Out of Sight, Out of Mind

My election in 1980 against the candidates of the two long-established caucuses made it clear the membership were dissatisfied with the committee in the plant. Members complained that the committee practiced out-of-sight, out-of-mind representation.

The main problem was then and still is, in my opinion, that the committeemen don't work on the shop floor and instead spend their time in the in-plant offices.

If a person does not have a job and there is an in-plant office to go to, instead of showing up in their zone every day they are found in their office. Pretty soon they don't even want to answer workers' calls in

person in their zone, but do it by phone from the office.

Workers with problems often simply want the union present to show the flag.

At one time, management used to police the in-plant offices and the committeemen's time. Not any more. The boss has learned that having a union representative out of sight is a small price to pay compared to having an active union on the shop floor.

Resistance to Change

As plant chairman from 1980 to 1987, I tried to clean up this problem. It was a losing battle.

The union's in-plant offices, which we call work centers, were supposed to be only for the shop committee, so we attempted to keep the zone committeemen out. This proved impossible—unless you put a cop on the door 24 hours a day!

In total frustration, I closed the in-plant offices, only to find that it was difficult for the shop committeemen to do their job, having no phone, or for me to meet with them. In addition, they started to hang out in the benefit offices and the canteen. I was led to the conclusion you cannot separate having a job on the floor from on-the-job representation.

As plant chairman for 8,500 workers I depended on the shop committee to keep me informed about what was on the workers' minds. But since the committeemen were not out on the floor, how could they know what was going on?

About four years into office, I thought about making some arrangement with the company to go back to work on the floor for two or three months. I was talked out of it on the grounds that the workers wanted me as chairman and not back at work. This may have been true, but in hindsight I still think I should have done it.

In the spring of 1987 I was re-elected plant chairman by a large majority, so I knew the membership were not dissatisfied with the job I was doing.

In the spring of 1988, the office of president became vacant. An election for president and executive board was held in March, even though the new board

would not take office until June. I decided to resign as plant chairman and run for president. If I won, I would be back on the shop floor until June and if not I would be back to work anyway.

Back to the Floor

I was elected and for the first time since 1980 I put on the coveralls and went back to work. Quite frankly, I was shocked by what I heard from the workers.

Although I was president-elect, the workers saw me as one of them and all I heard was complaints about the shop floor representation. By far, the most complaints were about not seeing their committeemen on the shop floor. I wrote an article for our local union paper pointing out what the membership were saying and that it was time to get back to basics even if it meant doing some work.

Well, of course, the elected committee were outraged. The powers that be were so upset that, although I have had a regular column for eight years, they tried to bury the article inside the paper.

What Is the Answer?

Full-time shop committeemen should report to their area every day and, as often as possible, spend an hour on the job, even if it's only giving a fellow worker a break.

This would solve the in-plant office problem, because if the committeemen spent as much time on the floor as they do now in the offices, there would be nobody to hang out with in the office.

Full-time officers should get back to the shop floor for a couple of months at least every five years.

The practice of out of sight, out of mind representation is a result of what we thought we needed to do our jobs. No matter how sincere you are when elected, however, you have got to police yourself so you don't get caught in the trap.

[At the time this article appeared in *Labor Notes*, John Clout was president of Canadian Auto Workers Local 199. Today he is the local's plant chairperson.]



Steward's Corner — September 1984

How to Organize A Stewards Council

by Steve Hochman and Bill Mollenhauer

Some locals have revived an old concept, one that has lain dormant for many years but is now essential—a Stewards Council. This is a body composed of all the stewards plus the chief stewards, shop chairs, and other officers involved in higher steps of the grievance procedure.

Many of our UE locals also include other key shop leaders who may not be stewards but are active members and well-respected in their areas. UE Local 1111 at the Allen-Bradley Co. in Milwaukee has "com-

mittee people" appointed to assist the steward and fill in in his or her absence. They are also invited to the Stewards Council.

In general a Stewards Council should be a second level of command in the local, composed of shop leaders who are closer to the membership on a day-to-day basis than the top officers are. The functions of a Stewards Council include:

- To create an active structure to coordinate shop struggle.

- To transmit information from the officers to the rank and file. This can include general union policy, problem contract sections, status of negotiations, and rumor control.

- To do ongoing training on the grievance procedure. In UE Local 1172, at Everbrite Electric Co., stewards practice writing up grievances during training sessions. Local 1111 holds a New Stewards Meeting once a year to orient new stewards on union policy and processing grievances.

- To involve key shop leaders in local decisions. This should be a two-way street, in which the top officers get feedback from stewards on the mood of the membership, and the stewards get more detailed explanations of certain problems and pressures faced by the local. Through this process, the top leadership should be better able to arrive at positions they can unite the local on.

A related consideration is the power relationship between the Executive Board and the Stewards Council, a question that must be answered by each local. In Local 1111, the Stewards Council has the right to make recommendations to the Executive Board. Any disagreements are ultimately resolved by the membership.

Future Leaders

- To develop future top leaders for the local. Through a Stewards Council, emerging activists can get involved in broader issues beyond their department and develop their union skills.

- To generate committees—for health and safety, a newsletter, political action, organizing the unorganized, strike support, etc. Many active locals face the problem of “burning out” their top officers. The natural breeding ground for rank and file committees that can ease the burden and deepen the leadership is the Stewards Council. In Local 1111, the Strike Committee, which is organized several months before each contract expiration, is mostly recruited right out of the Stewards Council.

- To get the stewards to work together as a team, to share information, to learn from one another, to understand the problems in different departments, and to support each other on grievances. This is doubly important for multi-company amal-

gamated locals where stewards can share information on problems in different companies in the same industry.

Some Pointers

- ✓ Amend the local's by-laws to establish the Stewards Council as a formal body of the local. Spell out its membership, role, and frequency of meetings.

- ✓ Get the Stewards Council together on a regular basis—at first maybe every two months, eventually every month. Make it a regular part of the stewards' duties to attend. Create a “political incentive” to attend by announcing the formation of the Council in a leaflet to the membership. Members will often check up on their stewards to see if they went to the meeting and to find out what was discussed.

- ✓ Structure an agenda with an organized program, so the meeting does not become an unfocused “rap session.” Make sure there is a balance of subjects on the agenda.

In Local 1111 we have 1) a Chief Steward's report on the work situation and the key grievances being processed; 2) a report on major new issues faced by the local (recently, for example: local policy on overtime, changes in insurance plans, the company's demands for “flexibility”); 3) an open discussion for stewards to raise problems that have come up in their areas; and 4) presentations by outside speakers on such topics as political issues, workers compensation, or health and safety.

In other UE locals we have made ongoing training a regular part of the Stewards Councils (for new and old stewards). Others have used the Council to organize the unorganized, by having stewards contact friends or relatives who work in non-union shops.

In many of our locals, the Stewards Council is the backbone of the union—a group of activists that keeps a strong union presence in all corners of the shop and can be mobilized on short notice to carry on unified activity on the union's behalf.

[At the time this article appeared in *Labor Notes*, Steve Hochman was a Field Organizer for the United Electrical Workers (UE) and Bill Mollenhauer was Chief Plant Steward of UE Local 1111 in Milwaukee. Today Hochman is Organizing Director for the Committee of Interns and Residents and Mollenhauer is a representative for AFSCME.]



Steward's Corner — June 1984

Stewards Training: The Heart of a Strong Local Union

by Paul Roose

The stewards' rights clause in our Letter Carriers contract is, like many, quite weak and thus a frustration for feisty reps who want to take care of problems as they arise.

The job carries with it few perks and often much harassment from management. Our local can afford to pay only token compensation for the stewards' hard

work and long hours. Therefore, training stewards in the spirit of unionism is our only hope.

Our monthly stewards' classes are mostly led by union officers and more experienced chief stewards. From time to time we use outside labor educators, attorneys, and leaders of other unions.

Some topics we have covered recently are:

- analyzing recent precedent-setting grievance decisions
- enforcing the health and safety sections of the contract
- EEOC and the steward
- using grievance win-loss statistics to obtain a better grievance resolution rate at the station level
- unfair labor practices and recent NLRB decisions
- how to investigate and document a grievance.

Communication

We try to stay away from a straight lecture format. We use role playing (e.g., a steward and a supervisor at a step one grievance hearing), brainstorming, case studies (with the names deleted), and handouts from *Labor Notes* and other sources. Time is usually set aside for open discussion in which stewards can ask questions, offer suggestions or raise concerns about union policies.

Stewards' meetings also serve as a vital communication link between stewards and union officers. At these sessions, stewards pick up their internal mail, which includes information on how their grievances turned out as well as general information.

Local officers in charge of setting up training should not get discouraged if only a third or a half of

the stewards turn out. After all, it is remarkable that people who must work 40-plus hours a week will give up an evening a month to spend even more time thinking about that hellhole called *work*. The ones who do show up deserve strokes. As in the 1880's and 1930's, shop stewards are still heroes, and they should be reminded of that every so often.

Realistically, an officer should plan for the fact that some stewards simply will not attend training sessions. Our local deals with this by sending out a monthly leadership mailing to all stewards, alternates, and branch officers. This mailing includes a "stewards notebook," grievance decisions from that station, and a notice of the next union meeting.

Strong Stewards = Strong Union

Maintaining a strong stewards' network requires a lot of time and resources on the part of local officers. Sometimes, it may seem tempting for local officers to try to do it all themselves and "get it done right."

This is a short-term solution at best, for the hard-working local officer drops from exhaustion and the union at the grass-roots level withers away. Only the well-trained steward can keep the "movement in the labor movement."

[Paul Roose is president of National Association of Letter Carriers Branch 1111 in the East Bay area of California.]

4. Organizing Around Health and Safety

In this chapter we will look at the basic steps of health and safety organizing and then at specific tactics—from walkouts to picnics—that union members have used.

Health & Safety Organizing: Basic Steps

One of the most important ways that unionists have fought for health and safety is through cross-union, city-wide coalitions called COSH groups (Committees on Occupational Safety and Health). There are at least 25 COSH groups in the United States today. (See Appendix E for information on contacting COSH groups.)

Since 1977 Jim Moran has been the director of PHILAPOSH, one of the first COSH groups. PHILAPOSH has 155 member unions in the Delaware Valley, which includes parts of Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. Moran himself was an auto worker, a steel worker, a Teamster, a textile worker and a member of the IUE before becoming director of PHILAPOSH.

In this interview, Moran lays out the steps union members can take when faced with a health or safety problem.

Q. What do the COSH groups do? What kind of services does PHILAPOSH offer?

A. We help local unions develop health and safety committees. We teach people how to look at their workplaces, and what are the hazards and what aren't. We help in strategizing to choose issues. And then we help in the tactical day-to-day fist fights to correct conditions.

We also bring the resources of a wider number of unions and their experiences. When people say, 'We'll try this,' we can point to XYZ Local where they tried that and it didn't seem to work, but it worked okay over here with a different kind of local.

We have a network of health professionals and legal professionals, and we know where all the sources are. People call us with every kind of problem you can think of, and if we don't have an answer right there, we can get them the information.

We can provide expert witnesses for arbitration and court cases. We help injured workers, explaining their rights under the compensation system. And we provide basic education on a wide variety of health and safety issues, including AIDS in the workplace, video display terminals, asbestos, how to use OSHA [the Occupational Safety and Health Administration].

We also further the education of developing union leadership; safety committees are a spawning ground for new leadership. In fact, the work we did used to scare the hell out of existing leadership. Taking workers to legislative hearings, having them testify, having them be spokespersons at press conferences, helping them write press releases, putting together information and learning where the resources are—in these ways you develop leadership, and it strengthens the local.

Another strength of PHILAPOSH is that when

Calling OSHA

In the states which have state OSHA programs, which is about half the states, workers must go to that agency first. The telephone number should be listed under state government, either Department of Labor or Department of Health. These agencies have names like MiOSHA (in Michigan) or CalOSHA (in California).

In states which do not have their own OSHA programs or for federal employees, workers can call federal OSHA. The number should be listed under the U.S. Government, Department of Labor, in large cities or state capitals.

you put together, as we have, 155 unions in the Delaware Valley, then when you talk to politicians around legislative issues they tend to listen more.

Q. What if a rank and file worker comes to you and says he or she is concerned about a particular issue but that the leadership does not seem to be. What do you recommend then?

A. The COSH group has to work through the existing leadership. So we will give the worker a mini-education on whatever issue they raised, and ask them to approach the leadership and urge them to be in touch with us, so we can point out the seriousness of the issue and offer assistance. Or I'll call a leadership person and try to get them interested in dealing with that problem. That rank and file worker might want to become part of the safety committee or help start one—many unions don't have any real health and safety committee.

A rank and file person alone has a big struggle in front of them if they want to take on the issue and the leadership at the same time.

Mass Grievances

Q. Let's say a local officer or steward comes to you with a health and safety problem. Where might you suggest they begin?

A. Step one is a mass grievance. Grievances over health and safety should not be individual grievances. Health and safety is a broader question, affecting more people.

This does two things: first, it educates each worker you talk to about what the problem is, because you can't assume everybody understands. Second, it approaches management with a much stronger grievance. It's not Joe's grievance, the health and safety nut, it's a broader grievance.

You would think mass grievances were common practice, but they're not. Even shop stewards don't always think from an organizer's perspective; they think the burden of solving the problem is on them. So they don't use the resources of their numbers.

Q. What else might you recommend if the problem continues?

A. There may be people suffering symptoms from the exposure. That can help escalate the action more rapidly. Put out a basic fact sheet on whatever the hazard is. Point out that the company doesn't want to do anything on this, and it threatens to do A, B, and C to your health, to your children, to your reproductive rights.

You might move from that to an emergency end-of-the-shift meeting in the parking lot, to plot further strategy. From there you might talk about shop floor slowdowns. Maybe everybody has to go to the dispensary at the same time, or everybody has to go get drinks of water at the same time, or everybody goes and asks the boss the same question, so the boss hears the same question all day long. The little things that are really mini-work stoppages.

Then I would think about a lunchtime rally at the plant gate, with a press conference.

Q. How would a local union organize such a press conference?

A. Write a press release and broadly distribute it to the media, the radio, the TV, the newspaper. Follow up with phone calls. Have a victim there, someone who is suffering from symptoms, and as much of the leader-



ship and the rank and file as possible. Don't do it as a walkout, but at lunch time so it's legit, and people can't get fired over it.

Q. Would you want a physician there?

A. To legitimate your issue you could have an industrial hygienist there and let them explain fact by fact what this stuff does to people, that it causes cancer, for example. Here's this company that's so insensitive to workers that in the name of profit it is willing to poison them, give them cancer, or kill them. That's pretty heavy P.R. on management. If they get wind of that beforehand—and I'd make sure they did get wind of it—they might want to settle the problem.

Q. You haven't mentioned OSHA, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Would you call in OSHA at this point?

A. Not unless it's immediately death-threatening. Most hazards are hazardous over the long term, so you have time. It's PHILAPOSH's philosophy that the important thing is to build the strength of the union, so that the union can solve the problem itself. That way you develop a health and safety committee, you educate the rank and file, you strengthen people so that they're figuring out tactics internally.

You use federal agencies as a last resort, as one weapon in your arsenal. But that's not your first move.

Q. If OSHA is called in later, after the union has first fought its way through the issue, then what?

A. The union may want to do press about that, and it certainly will be involved in the inspection and the tour. All the stewards have to be prepared to lead OSHA around by the nose to point out all the problems in a wall-to-wall inspection.

Otherwise OSHA can come in, run through the place on roller skates, nobody hardly knows they're there. Not much citation comes out of it if you don't

do the right follow-up. So it's a wasted shot. Furthermore, OSHA can actually legitimate the boss's position. They can do an air measurement that says, "You're not exposed that much, you're within the limits." You can lose in that kind of case unless you do the preparation.

Q. Let's say that we've done several of the things that you suggest, and we still are not making progress. Now what?

A. You might want to have a rally at the plant and call in all the union friends you have. We want to say, This is a problem that faces working people, it's not isolated to this plant, labor is going to stand together and challenge this company to straighten this out.

And bring in some heavier guns. Bring in the International union. Bring in the Central Labor Council. Bring in your brother and sister locals from your own International as well as other kinds of unions.

Q. How do we get the issue taken care of in the contract?

A. All the organizing serves to develop contract language. The contract is an evolving document, and fights over health and safety point to weaknesses in the contract. So you write up contract proposals to avoid having to go through these wringers every time there's a problem. You want language on the Health and Safety Committee and what its rights are: the right to inspect, the right to tour, the right to shut down unsafe equipment. You want to empower the union so you don't have to reinvent the wheel on each case.

But you can't stop the same level of energetic work once you have a safety committee. That includes constant bulletins out to the membership, reports at every membership meeting, fact sheets being distributed through the shop whenever there is a specific hazard.

Mapping Workplace Health Problems

A health and safety group in Mexico, the Centro de Salud Laboral (Workplace Health Center), uses a simple "mapping" technique with workers who have no previous health and safety training. This is a technique a new health and safety committee might want to use to gather the knowledge of the workforce and to get other workers involved.

The idea is to "map" the workplace in terms of your five senses and the organs that experience those sensations: seeing, hearing, touch, smell, and taste. Workers in each area sit down and draw a map of their part of the plant or office. Then you begin to ask questions dealing with each of the five senses. Start with the eyes, vision. What are the things at work that affect your eyes? Is there adequate lighting? Are there machines that bother people's eyes? Do people complain of burning eyes? As each question is answered makes notes on the map of the source of the problem.

Hearing will deal with noises that hurt your ears or leave you hard of hearing. Touch will deal with

everything that affects your skin, from cuts to rashes. Smell will deal with everything that affects your nose and your lungs. Taste may deal with the fact that the water at work tastes peculiar. As the discussion goes on new information comes out. For example, when you discuss the skin, it may turn out that there are a dozen workers who report having irritation or rashes.

In a garment shop, women complained that there was not enough light, and that hurt their eyes. They circled the lamps and the windows. In an office, it was the VDT which hurt their eyes. In a chemical plant, people's eyes were burning from some unknown irritant; they thought it was a substance leaking from a tank. In a factory a machine threw off metal fragments and two workers got small fragments in their eyes. They circled that machine on the map and labelled it with the problem it had caused.

The mapping technique allows you to focus on the worst problems and to formulate your grievance: there are ten workers who complain of problems with the machine that throws off metal fragments, from eye problems to cuts on their skin. It gives you the information to take the next step: demanding that the machine be repaired or replaced, for example, or finding out what is in that open barrel. The committee should combine the area maps into one big map as the beginning of their documentation of workplace hazards.

Walkout Over Safety

One of the groups with which Jim Moran has worked over the years is the city employees of Philadelphia. Their struggle against asbestos illustrates the steps Moran described earlier.

In the spring of 1986 hundreds of city employees, union and non-union, walked out and refused to work in the 14-story City Hall Annex until the city came up with a plan for the safe rehabilitation of the building. The fight had begun two years before.

"Back in 1984 we developed a committee around the condition of City Hall Annex," recalls Judy Hoover, a tax assessor and the Health and Safety Coordinator for AFSCME District 47.

"There were 32 license and inspection violations and fire violations, it was filthy. There was not very much security, there were no crash bars on the doors, and the back doors were locked so in a fire you could not get out.

"We organized a building health and safety committee. District Council 47 started it, but we involved the District Council 33 members also, which is the union for the blue and pink collar workers. Council 47 has the professional and technical employees and supervisors. There were about 200 or 250 AFSCME members in both locals, but on the rest of the floors nobody was represented by a union. However, we involved them from the beginning because we felt it was important to get the support of the whole building."

Through biweekly health and safety meetings, the group decided to concentrate on fire and security

issues. The Fire Department made an inspection and told the group that "no one above the third level would get out alive."

The group met with the managing director. As a result seminars were held with both police and fire officials. Workers were taught how to protect themselves in a fire; there were fire drill instructions and the selection of fire captains. Building security was tightened and police patrol increased. Nevertheless, the fundamental engineering and structural problems with the building remained.

Fighting Asbestos Contamination

"Then it was discovered that the building was grossly contaminated with asbestos," Hoover remembers. "The way we found out was that a secretary came to work early one morning, and in came this man in what she called a space outfit. He climbed up a ladder and started breaking away stuff from the ceiling.

"Her husband had asbestosis, so she knew right away what was going on. She wasn't even represented by a union, but she called us because we had been at the forefront of campaigning for health and safety.

"They would not close the building. They would not even close the floor of the building. They were putting up plastic barriers, but they weren't true barriers, and there was no inverse breathing system, nothing the way it should have been done."

As a result of several rehab projects over the years and the construction of a commuter tunnel with the use of explosives, much of the asbestos had been

loosened up and made more dangerous. "In a high-rise building," Hoover explains, "asbestos has a smoke-stack affect, so you're in more danger on the top floors than the bottom floors that are closer to the actual asbestos. It was dry and friable and dangerous. The 13th and 14th floors were the worst, and the 11th and 12th not too good either, and the sub-basement was grossly contaminated.

"So we had some educationals about why asbestos was dangerous, and why even though some of the people had worked there for 20 and 30 years, maybe it wasn't dangerous then but it was now.

"Public employees aren't covered by OSHA, and we don't have a state OSHA law. The only thing we could do was some informational picketing, because management stopped meeting with us.

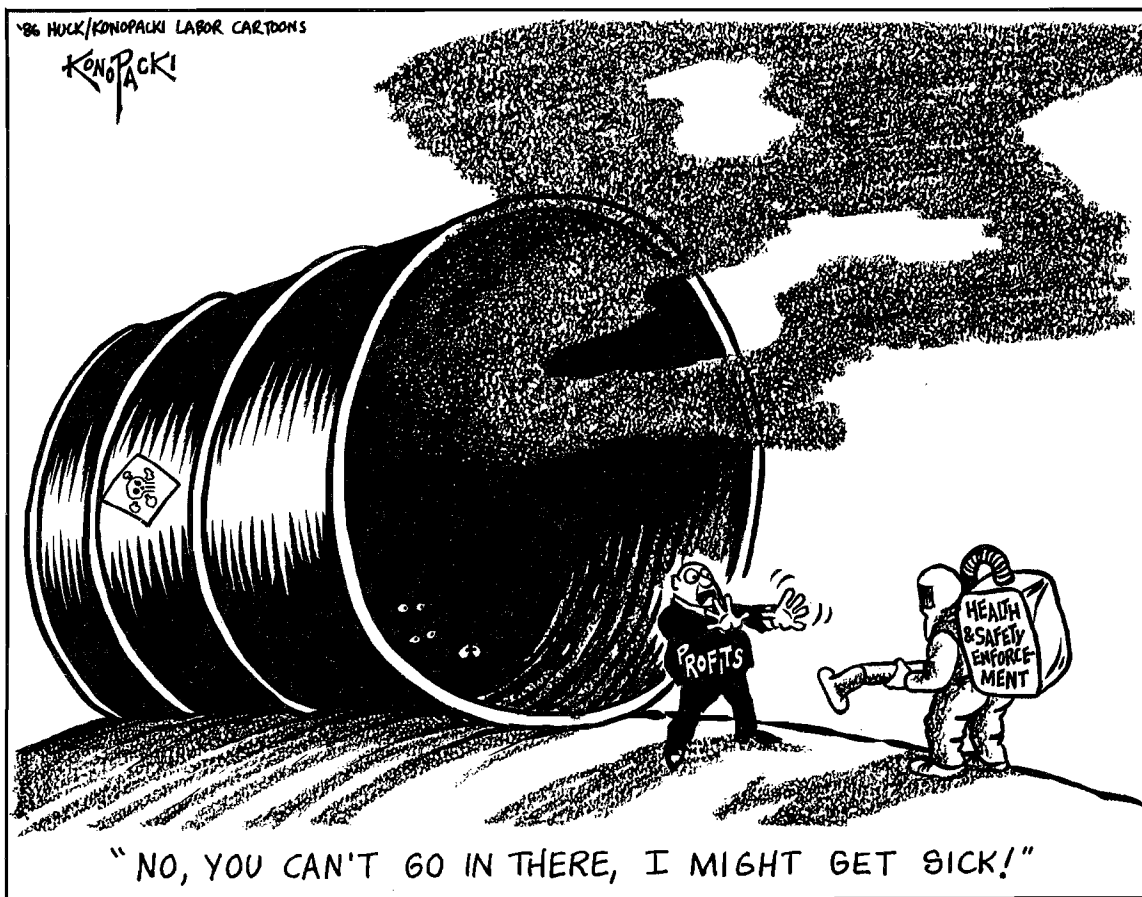
"So I took a union leave of absence, and I structured the informational picketing in front of the building. We offered people paper face masks before they went into the court." The paper face masks were no protection against the asbestos, but they were the union's way of bringing the issue to the public's attention. "A lot of people wouldn't go in if you offered them one. They had babies with them in strollers, and we'd give them a mask for their baby and they wouldn't go in.

"We took some city officials on tours and showed them the asbestos crumbling in the bathrooms and in the offices and holes drilled in the ceiling, and explained to them why it was dangerous, and gave them papers on it."

At the same time, near the end of 1985, PHILA-

POSH was actively lobbying for an asbestos ordinance in the city, which the health and safety committee supported. At the time any contractor could go into the business of asbestos removal with no training and no specifications about how the asbestos was to be removed. The ordinance would have required standards and training.

"We were filling the city council's chamber every day with signs—'Safe Work,' 'Safe Jobs,' 'Support Safe City Jobs,'—and screaming



about it at city council every day," says Hoover, "and it was one of the reasons the asbestos ordinance passed in Philadelphia.

"In the spring of 1986 we were at the point where we were ready to walk out. We mobilized the entire building, even patronage workers who had a good chance of losing their jobs and court workers, and we walked right out of the building and had a rally on the street.

"There were about a thousand people there, and we explained to them that we weren't going to go back in until we got some resolution. They were even ready to lose their jobs. And we told people who were in jeopardy that our legal firm would help them if they lost their jobs, but we felt it was a life and death matter. Everybody walked out—even the asbestos workers union that had the contract walked out with us.

"At that point the mayor agreed to meet with us again, during the news coverage of that rally. And by the end of the day we had an agreement on how to clean the building." The city agreed to seal off and clean three floors at a time.

"That was the same month they passed the asbestos ordinance," Hoover says. "Now contractors have to be licensed."

The health and safety committee not only won a safe plan for the clean-up of the asbestos, but it also strengthened the union.

"It really mobilized the membership," Hoover says, "and we went right from that into negotiations and into a strike. It had a real impact on how strong and ready those people were to strike and to get what they wanted during the strike."

A Health and Safety Committee Revitalizes the Union

Terry Holm is a machinist and one of 125 year-round workers at the American Crystal Sugar Company in Hillsboro, North Dakota. He is president of Local 372 of the American Federation of Grain Millers. Though North Dakota is an open shop state, the union includes all of the year-round workers and over 90 percent of the 200 seasonal employees.

Beets are brought into the plant from surrounding farms, washed, sliced, and boiled to produce sugar. "They use a lot of chemicals," says Holm, "formaldehyde, SO₂, muriatic acid. There's a lot of trouble with carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide. It's hazardous work, no question about it."

A few years ago, a worker died from carbon monoxide. "This made safety the top thing in everybody's mind," Holm says. Not long after, the Grain Millers hired an industrial hygienist named Joel Carr to work with locals on health and safety issues. Holm tells how they organized a committee:

"I told each steward to pick another person on their shift they thought would be good with this type of stuff. The stewards and the people that they picked and all the union officers went to this Joel Carr meet-

ing.

"From each shift we had two, and from day shift there were 12 or 14 people on the safety committee. We got into chemical awareness, lockout procedures, confined area permits, and this really opened people's eyes. We started to pass on information. What really got everybody is the chemicals that we're using."

While Holm began the health and safety committee with the stewards, he soon phased the stewards out. He felt it was important to get more people involved, so he asked for health and safety representatives. Several were women who had not previously held an office in the local. "When we put up a list saying this is the steward on A shift, steward on B shift, these are your officers and these are all your safety committee members—you'll fill up a piece of paper. So when we have 125 year-round people, and we got 30 or 40 all involved in the union, it builds the solidarity too."

Not long after the health and safety committee was organized, the local sponsored a "safety awareness picnic." The safety committee put up posters in the plant and around town. The workers brought their families to the picnic, which was also an educational event.

The AFGM had as speakers Ray Rogers from Corporate Campaign, Inc. (see Chapter 13), Joel Carr on health and safety on the job, and an expert from North Dakota State University on safety in the home. The *Fargo Forum* newspaper carried a story about the event, as did the AFGM newspaper. "It turned out great," says Holm.

WATCH—A Rank and File Group Fights Hazards

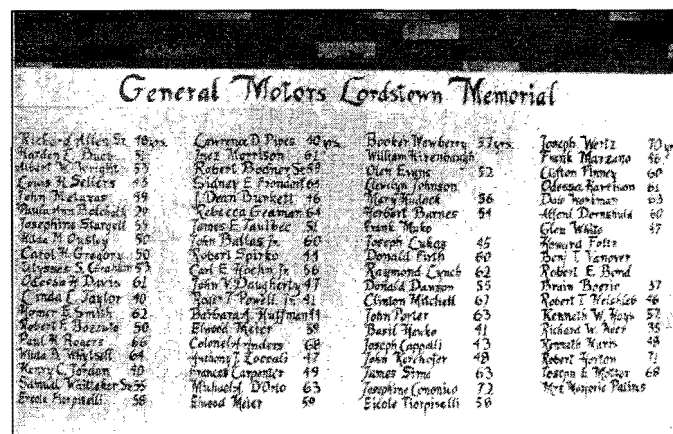
Charles Reighard worked for General Motors at its Lordstown, Ohio plant. He began having migraine headaches that sometimes led to dizziness, vomiting and blackouts, but he got nowhere when he tried to discover the cause.

"I started asking the material men for information," Reighard says. "I started asking foremen. I tried to see the plant manager, but he wouldn't see me. I went to the production manager, and he saw me but a day later he tried to have me fired."

In 1984 Reighard was classified as permanently "chemically disabled" and placed on extended disability benefits. "You can't lead a normal life with this," Reighard says. "You can't go in stores, like the detergent aisle of a grocery store, you can't do any kind of hobby that has chemicals in it. My daughter or wife can't wear perfume or hairspray around me. There are limits where I can go, like a restaurant. I'm not supposed to drive with my family in the car. It messes up everything you took for granted." He nevertheless decided that he would not give up the fight. "I started writing letters: to the chairman of the board, Roger Smith; to all the union officials, clear up to [UAW President] Owen Bieber. But none of these

people would do me any good."

Reighard next tried writing to his Congresspeople and state representatives. Only one, Rep. June Lucas, answered. She passed on information about Reighard to a reporter from UPI. "United Press



General Motors Lordstown Memorial

Richard Allen Sr. 78	Lawrence D. Pipes 40	Brooks Newberry 53	Joseph Vertz 70
Harold E. Duce 5	Jack Harrison 61	William K. Venning 52	Frank Marzano 46
Robert W. Wright 57	Robert Roemer Sr. 59	Clay Evans 52	Clifton Hines 60
James H. Sellers 78	William E. Friedman 68	Clayton Johnson 56	Alfred Harrison 61
John McElroy 59	William D. Smith 76	Clayton Johnson 56	David Hoffman 60
Paula Ann Bales 20	Robert E. Brennan 64	Robert Barnes 54	Alfred Dornshuld 60
Josephine Sturgill 59	James E. Jankovic 61	Frank Mako 45	Clayton 57
Walter M. Dingley 50	John Dallas Jr. 60	Joseph Cukaz 45	Robert E. Bond 37
Carol M. Gregory 50	Robert Spitz 44	Donald Firth 60	Robert E. Bond 37
William S. Graham 57	Carl E. Hoch Jr. 56	Raymond Lynch 62	Robert E. Bond 37
Deborah H. Davis 61	John V. Dougherty 47	Donald Dawson 55	Robert E. Bond 37
Charles L. Taylor 40	John T. Powell Jr. 41	Clinton Mitchell 67	Robert E. Bond 37
Robert E. Smith 62	Barbara A. Hufmann 38	John Porter 63	Robert E. Bond 37
Robert E. Smith 62	Blanca Miller 38	Basil Harko 41	Robert E. Bond 37
Paul W. Rogers 60	Colleen Sanders 68	Joseph Cappali 43	Robert E. Bond 37
Wanda D. Smith 64	William J. Roberts 49	John Kerschner 48	Robert E. Bond 37
Kerry C. Jordan 50	James Campbell 49	James Pima 63	Robert E. Bond 37
Samuel Walker Sr. 55	Michael D. Ohio 63	Josephine Conino 72	Robert E. Bond 37
Erica Fargnoli 56	Edward Miller 50	Enola Hopmirelli 50	Robert E. Bond 37

The General Motors-Lordstown Memorial created by the WATCH group.

International came out to my house and did an article about me, and it went across the country," Reighard explains. "When that happened, more people who were having the same problems started coming to me."

Reighard set up a meeting and several workers showed up. They formed a group and took the name Chemically Disabled Employees of General Motors. They tried the same tactics that Reighard had used—letters to company and union officials and to GM stockholders—to no avail. Then June Lucas told them about Staughton and Alice Lynd, labor lawyers and activists who live in the Youngstown area. The Lynds began to offer suggestions and became informal advisors to the group.

Reighard and the others wrote a leaflet and distributed it at the Lordstown plant. This brought them people who were still working, and the group began to grow. They also attracted people from other plants in the area. They called the new group WATCH, Workers Against Toxic Chemical Hazards.

Obituaries Tell the Tale

The GM workers believed that there was an abnormally high incidence of illness and death in the Lordstown plant, and wanted to prove it. They went to local libraries and copied every newspaper obituary dealing with a worker from their plant between January 1987 and July 1988.

"The major causes of death," says Reighard, "were cancer, leukemia, and heart disease. We initially found 75 people that died out at our plant. We now have 97, and they died at the average age of 56."

The obituaries from the two papers were not scientifically conclusive, but they were politically effective. WATCH decided to borrow an idea from the Viet Nam War Memorial in Washington. They painted all the names of the people who had died on a 4' X 8' sheet of plywood and at the top wrote "General

Motors-Lordstown Memorial."

Using a reproduction of the memorial plaque, in October 1988 WATCH members distributed a leaflet in the plant. "Why so many, why so young?" the leaflet asked. "How many more? *Are you next?*" The effect was dramatic. Three days later WATCH called a press conference. "We had a lot of people there," says Reighard, "husbands or sons or sisters or brothers, anybody that wanted to come forward. We had widows, we had people that were sick, we had people that were still working. We invited the UAW and the plant manager."

Both the plant manager and the president of UAW Local 1112 showed up. "They tried to take it over," says Reighard. "They tried to say that these people died in car accidents, that they died years ago, that some of them were alcoholics."

"I said, 'There's something wrong here—I guess the coroner couldn't tell the man was killed in a car accident because he wrote down cancer.' And we had copies of all the obituaries."

Under the pressure of the press conference and continuing publicity, in January 1989 GM agreed to have a mortality study done of the Lordstown plant.

The study is partially completed. "According to the preliminary study," Reighard says, "if you work in the car plant, you have 37 percent more chance of getting cancer than if you didn't work there. And if you work in the stamping plant, it's 48 percent. The average age of the people who died at that plant was 46, with 11 years seniority."

"And that's just a part of it. They're even looking into the car accidents. People out at the plant have had more car accidents than should be expected." WATCH believes that the chemical exposure may cause dizziness which leads to accidents.

The company and UAW International are now doing a more in-depth study which will include people who are sick as well as those who have died. WATCH sees the study as a partial victory, but continues to organize. "We have a meeting the third Sunday of every month," says Reighard. "We get an average of 25 to 50 people to our meetings, and they are all people who have had problems. We get phone calls almost daily from people who have problems and they don't know where to go."

WATCH members wear WATCH sweatshirts or t-shirts to call attention to their group. They put out leaflets and a regular newsletter with the members' names and phone numbers so that others workers can contact the group.

WATCH has taken the General Motors-Lordstown Memorial to Labor Day parades and other events. They have begun to work in coalition not only with Ohio Citizen Action, a grassroots group of community activists, but also with Greenpeace, the environmental organization. As time and money permit they have traveled to other cities in the United States and Canada to meet with auto workers and others concerned about toxic hazards. They have been contacted by workers from all over the United States and Canada looking for help.

Asked about the lessons of his experience, Charles Reighard says, "Don't give up, that's the main lesson. If you think something's wrong, keep questioning it, and don't let the big bosses scare you. Because if you know in your heart you're right, then don't ever give up."

The Cancer Watch Group

The WATCH group has influenced workers in other plants, among them members of UAW Local 735 who work at the GM Hydramatic Plant in Ypsilanti, Michigan.

"Initially we modeled ourselves on them," says Mike Leslie, the first vice-president of the local. However, the Cancer Watch Group has grown up in close cooperation with the local union and with the support of the UAW health and safety department.

The Hydramatic plant employs 6,800 hourly workers producing transmissions. "We work with a million different parts that go in the transmission," says Leslie. "Machining them, and grinding them, and milling them. You've got all kind of chemicals here in this plant.

"If somebody dies or gets sick, the people on the line take up a collection and buy them flowers. Then they started noticing that they were taking collections or passing cards around for all these people who had died of brain cancer. There was one woman who was popular in the assembly area who died of brain cancer. And these workers said, Wait a minute. Didn't so and so die six months ago from that, and another person on this line die from it, and then these other three folks are in the hospital now with brain cancer."

When Leslie ran for vice-president of the local in January 1989, cancer was one of the issues he campaigned on. Then in May he and others distributed 5,000 flyers at the plant gate, announcing a meeting about brain cancer deaths at Hydramatic. At that meeting workers compiled the names of co-workers who had died, along with their former jobs. Active and laid-off workers, surviving spouses, union reps and many cancer victims were there. The Cancer Watch Group had begun. Volunteer forms asking for more people to sign up were printed and distributed plantwide. "In all," says Leslie, "we have well over 100 people signed up now, with about 25-30 people who are the actual core. And they're not all working, some are laid-off, some are retirees, some are family members of cancer victims.

"To get the information on where this cancer is happening, we put the word out in the plant. We dropped leaflets, advertised on the plant's TV system, and put articles in the local union newspaper.

"So we got flipcharts loaded with names: some are still alive, some have died. We're trying to section them off by department, age, race, smoker or non-smoker, what they were exposed to, departments they worked in.

"The salaried people are calling us also. We've got supervisors who have given us names of other en-

gineers or salaried people who have died of brain cancer or other kinds of cancer."

In September 1989 it was announced that Harvard University and the University of Lowell (Massachusetts) would do a major study on brain and larynx cancer in the plant. Leslie says that earlier pressure from union officers as well as CWG's activity got the study moving. CWG volunteers are determined that this one will be conducted differently than Harvard's last study at the plant.

Study Results Hushed Up

In 1985 Harvard had studied the effects on workers' lungs of machine coolants and mist. But from 1985 to 1989 no one heard a word about the results. Then in the spring of 1989, while visiting the Pittston miners' Camp Solidarity, Leslie met a doctor who told him the results had already been published in a medical journal. It was later discovered that the researchers had run up against management interference. Union members due for retesting were transferred. Air quality tests were thrown off by tampered ventilation.

This time around, Cancer Watch members have acquired the study's proposal, schedule and procedures and have been told they can be involved in it, contacting families and union members. "But that was November of last year," said Leslie in July 1990. "We're going to have to start putting the pressure on them again."

The group also wanted to make sure everyone in the local was informed about the studies. They decided to mail the 1985 lung study, the brain/larynx cancer proposal, and a shorter, less technical report on both to the local's members—over 9,000 active, retired and laid-off. The local's executive board financed a raffle, with proceeds going towards postage costs. The board also provided paper, office space, phones, printing equipment and clerical support. Nine hundred dollars was raised through the raffle. "Volunteers collated, stapled, stuffed and sealed thousands and thousands of envelopes," says Leslie. "Some took work home. Others drafted grandchildren and neighbors to help.

"Union leaders can be as guilty as management in thinking members can't do a job. On Friday afternoon, while organizing the stacks of paper, tables, equipment and calling dozens of volunteers to come in Monday, I realized I'd scheduled a meeting that same morning across town.

"After the meeting, I zoomed to the local not knowing if any volunteers had shown. They had. Twenty volunteers. They had already assembled 2,000 booklets. No bosses, no supervisors standing over them. And because I was late I had to buy pizza."

The union has convinced the company to have a specialist from the UAW Health and Safety Department do a plant-wide occupational cancer training. The union is also trying to get the company to buy its chemicals through one source, in order to reduce the variety of chemical trade names and the number of different chemicals used.

"What we want to do," says Leslie, "is take our in-

formation and compare it to whatever Harvard comes up with. It's not that we don't trust Harvard—but we don't trust them and we definitely don't trust management. It's like an insurance. Everybody knows that corporations give big bucks into these medical schools, and it's not unlikely that a study could be thrown off track.

"The only thing with a study is, studies take time. Our attitude is you can do studies and testing and sampling to death, and you have to passively sit and wait. We want the studies to happen, but this is also a chance to get some things taken care of. Engineering controls—making sure all the poisonous chemicals aren't brought in the plant, or that the machinery people are working on is well maintained, or that ventilation is working. And not throw up smokescreens of telling people they should wash their hands before they go to lunch. That's important—but the corporation has a responsibility not to poison people."

Action Questions

1. Make a health and safety map of your workplace. First make a rough drawing of the workplace showing the different work areas. Now using each of your sense organs (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin) indicate the sources of irritation, discomfort, pain or medical problems. (Examples: poor light in area A, excessive noise in area B, chemical odors, perhaps toxics in area C, funny taste to water, perhaps pollution in area D, skin rashes in area E.) Circle the area which is the most dangerous problem and another which is the problem for the greatest number of people.

2. Make a list of the outstanding health and safety problems in your plant. Which ones seem the most important? Who is affected by them?

3. Is the health and safety issue so urgent that you should immediately refuse to work in that area or with that chemical, machine or other hazard? You may have the right under law or under your contract to stop work, but it may be hard to protect your rights. Remember, this may be a big decision for you or your union!

4. If you are not going to refuse to work there right now, what are you going to do about those problems? A grievance? A group grievance? If a group grievance, who will be the group? Will it be presented as a group as well? During work time—interrupting production—or during break time?

5. Can you produce a fact sheet to educate other workers about the problem? If it is a chemical, does the company have the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS), as is required by law, in the office? Who will go and find out? Who can break it down into a simple leaflet for everybody?

6. If you have already done a grievance or a group grievance, do you need to take other action? A petition in the plant or the community? A rally in front of the office or plant? What would work best in your workplace?

7. Would it be appropriate to bring in some higher-level union help? From the district office? From the International? From the local Central Labor Council? Who knows most about these questions? Who will talk to that person?

8. Take out your contract and look at the sections relevant to health and safety (these may not be labelled as such). Are those good enough? What else would you want included? Draw up a rough contract proposal to deal with the most pressing issues. Should such a clause be presented to the union executive board or bargaining committee at the next meeting?

9. Do you have a health and safety committee in your workplace? Is it run by the company? By the union? Is it a joint committee? Does the committee do a good job? Do you need to get more people involved in that committee or to elect new leadership to it?

10. If you have no such committee, should you organize one? Who are three people who would be good to get it started? Why do you choose them? Are they representative of the different areas and groups you need to involve?

11. Would it be good to call a health and safety meeting, either to revive a faltering committee or to start a new one? What issue would you put on the agenda that would attract people? Who would you ask to speak? A worker health expert? Or would you simply have a discussion among co-workers?

12. In the event you need it, where can you go for outside help? Is there a COSH group in your area? What about the International's health and safety department? What about the National Institute of Occupational Safety & Health (NIOSH), OSHA or the state OSHA? How about the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)? If you are a driver, what about the Department of Transportation's Bureau of Motor Carrier Safety? (See Appendix E for information on contacting NIOSH and the COSH groups.)

5. Dealing With Labor-Management Cooperation Programs

During the 1980s corporate management propositioned the labor movement. Their labor-management cooperation plans took many forms—quality programs, team concept, statistical process control, sociotechnical systems—and made many promises: an end to the adversarial relationship between company and union; workers' control over the work process; better quality for consumers; dignity on the job.

The programs are attractive to many union members: "quality circles" or "teams" seem like an opportunity to humanize the workplace. Workers will be organized into small groups which, instead of carrying out management's commands, will participate in real decision making. They will learn to "work smarter, not harder." No more will Frederick Taylor's and Henry Ford's ideals run the workplace, no more breakdown of jobs into boring and repetitive monotonous actions. Instead workers will become "multiskilled" through job rotation, moving from one job to another. Cooperating with management, workers will take pride in doing a quality job. This "win-win" situation will strengthen job security; in fact, according to its proponents, in this competitive world it is the only route to any job security at all.

Such were the promises. In reality, the goal of these programs is to weaken the union and give management, not workers, greater control.

Their goal is to reorganize the work process itself, into a production system which can be called "management by stress." Management in all industries wants to reorganize the workplace. All slack must be eliminated. The job of the circles and teams is to analyze each other's work to make it more efficient and productive. Workers are told to police and push each other, and teams are even taught time and motion study. "Quality" turns out to mean not higher quality to the customer but less waste in the production process—and "too many" workers is a big part of that "waste."

After the work has been reorganized, it turns out that multi-skilling is really de-skilling, because production workers don't learn a new craft and office workers don't learn a new profession; instead they simply add another boring job onto the ones they already do. Management uses the team's self-study to appropriate workers' intimate knowledge of the job process and to break down their skills—or transfer them to machines.

The teams, which were supposed to be little models of shop floor democracy, turn out to be little centers of coercion where workers are brainwashed into seeing the workplace through management's eyes.

Through management's eyes, the world looks different. The union brothers and sisters who work for another corporation, or even another plant owned by the same corporation, are the enemy. Even workers on your own team may have to be "terminated by peer evaluation" or, as one company puts it, "deselected."

Management's version of a humanized workplace turns out in fact to be a world of ruthless competition. Working smarter really means working harder and faster. The old management style has been replaced by a new, more subtle and more insidious coercion, especially if management has succeeded in winning over the union officials. In the end, the plant is humming, the union has all but disappeared, and the plant manager is smiling—and now we know why.

Choose Your Strategy

It is difficult to generalize about what will work for a union in dealing with cooperation programs. The most important factor is the union's own history of self-organization. Some unions have been able to simply stop a program before it began. Others, once it was introduced, have boycotted it and stopped it that

way. Some unions have accepted a joint program, and then worked to transform it from within—a tricky proposition, but sometimes the only choice. Many of the same tactics are usable in all three situations. See the questions at the end of this chapter to help you decide which strategy to pursue.

In any case, the goal is the same—to keep the program from brainwashing the members, and to strengthen the union's own organization in the process. **The key is educating the members on what cooperation programs are really about.** Because they appeal to the worker as an individual, much one-on-one education will be necessary.

In this chapter, we will focus not so much on the content of the membership education you will need to do as on the actions that some locals have carried out. For help in your education plan, see two other Labor Notes books: *Inside the Circle: A Union Guide to Quality of Work Life* and *Choosing Sides: Unions and the Team Concept* (see Appendix E).

Whichever strategy you choose, these points hold true:

- It is a big mistake for the union simply to let things happen and then grieve individual contract violations as they come up. You will need the big picture and an overall strategy.
- Education of the entire membership is critical. A union leadership cannot defeat the aims of these programs working in isolation.
- Once the membership is educated, many of the mobilization tactics you would use against any other management offensive are suitable.
- You will have to keep coming back again and again, perhaps fighting new programs with new names.

Refusing to Play the Jointness Game

Some unions have derailed company programs simply by refusing to participate. See, for instance, the leaflet here and the Stewards Corner by Randy McSorley on the "just say nothing" tactic. A few more examples:

T-Shirt Day

At the Shasta paper mill in Anderson, California, the company tried to bring in a program called QMS. "They set up a few teams," remembers Doug Pruitt, editor of *The Shasta Paperworker* in United Paperworkers Local 1101, "and these teams started designing operator training manuals. These training manuals really were scab manuals."

Local 1101 was involved in a nationwide effort called "Outreach," in which it kept in touch with other paper mill locals. "Through this Outreach," explains Pruitt, "we were able to gain a lot of information to help combat this program. A lot of it came from Local 147 [see the Stewards Corner at the end of this chapter].

"We also had a video tape that was produced by a

retired rep. He went through a mill back East, where they had broken the classifications down to just a team in the paper mill and a team in the pulp mill. There went the classifications and everything else we fought for.

"By gaining information on this QMS we were able to educate our members. Our members protested this program, and we got rid of it."

The members protested by wearing red T-shirts all on the same day. "One week we had 97 percent participation and we had a membership of 550—I'm pretty damn proud of that," says Pruitt. The union sent letters to members who participated in QMS asking them to pull out. With no cooperation from the workers, the company was forced to withdraw the QMS program, and the union was left stronger, says Pruitt. "Going through this program, and getting rid of it, helped build a lot of solidarity among our membership. A few months later, they tried to implement an incentive program. We beat that too, two-thirds majority, threw it out."

We Have an Attitude

In 1982 management at the Weyerhaeuser pulp mill in Kamloops, British Columbia conducted an attitude survey among its employees. But, says Garry Worth, president of Pulp, Paper, and Woodworkers Local 10, information gathered from that survey was used against the union and its members.

So when in 1989 the company proposed another attitude survey, the union held a membership meeting, discussed the proposal, and voted not to par-

Nothing can stop Q1!

The Q1 program at Thilmany is under way, and there doesn't seem to be a way to stop it. Shouting at Joe Bergomi doesn't stop it. Talking about the strike in DePere doesn't stop it. Having discussions about our premium pay doesn't stop it. But there is something that can defeat the Q1 program. Nothing.

When you are forced to go to the Q1 meeting, do nothing. Don't write down "what you expect to get out of Q1". Don't "count off" when they ask you. Don't fill out the "Inner Customer" posterboard. Don't argue with the facilitator. Don't watch the videos. Don't complain about the food. Nothing.

Doing nothing takes courage and will power. When you hear some of the outrageous statements they make, you'll want to shout, scream, and argue. Don't. That is what they want. They're trying to open a "dialog", and consider it "good for Q1". They're not counting on one thing. Nothing.

What CAN you do? Wear your red shirts to show them your Solidarity in this battle. Doodle. Bring some popcorn to munch. Look out the window. Keep your mouth shut, and settle in for a long, boring day. Other than that... Nothing.

**We're not asking you to "Just Say No" to Q1.
We're asking you to "Just Say Nothing".**

Leaflet by UPIU Local 147 on management's Q1 quality program.

ticipate. Worth drafted a letter summarizing the union's position and posted it.

"The very next day," says Worth, "they brought in a consultant who was an expert on attitude surveys. The consultant sat down with the first crew and took about 10 or 15 minutes to explain how confidential it was going to be, and it was nothing that was going to be used against us, just a testing of the waters.

"So the first guy got up, who was the shop steward: 'Is this mandatory? Do we have to fill this out?'"

"Of course the consultant was very adamant, 'Oh, no, you don't have to fill it out. Take it home, and bring it back to us later, put it in the mail or whatever.'"

"If it's not mandatory..." said the steward, and he picked it up and dumped it in the garbage can and walked out the door. And everybody else followed him."

Snub Them

United Parcel Service (UPS) had many features of the team concept long before they became fashionable: uniforms, pep talks and constant control of every detail of the worker's activity. Anthony Smith is a UPS package car driver and a steward in Teamster Local 639.

"Every morning they give a little pep talk, a little propaganda talk," says Smith. "A 'Pre-Work Communications Meeting' they call it, or PCM. If there's something going on in PCM that is contrary to what I think is good for us, I turn around. It's so simple and it's so effective. Every human being needs contact, and one of the main things in human contact is eye-to-eye contact. When you cannot see a person's eyes you cannot talk to them.

"I'm not confronting them, I'm not disobeying orders, but I'm slapping them in the face, and the rest of the guys get a charge out of that. That builds our solidarity, gives them a feeling of strength.

"I had one supervisor who really dug himself a hole, because he screamed at me to turn around, and this was the first day of his new manager above him, and I just looked at him like he was some kind of fool, and put my head back down writing what I was writing and ignored him. And the rest of the guys got a big kick out of it.

"When I turn around and the guys know that I am unhappy, their ears really perk up, they pay attention and they realize that the supervisor is saying something that is not right. They will come to me afterwards or talk among themselves, and they say, 'We'll take care of him.'"

No Videos Here

Kevin Corrigan works for Canada Wire and Cable and is president of UE Local 521 in Toronto. The plant has about 500 members in the bargaining unit. To get the full effect of this story, you should imagine you are hearing Corrigan tell it himself in his

strong Irish accent.

"We didn't know anything about the team concept or quality circles," remembers Corrigan. "Then one day the company decided they were going to throw a big party, and everyone thought 'Great!' Saturday, all the wives and kids, and they had a band playing, hot dogs, ice cream. Gee, we just had a great time.

"Then all of a sudden all of these signs started appearing, about 'Zero Defects,' and big Q's, 'Quality Circles,' all over the plant. This is what it was all about, to introduce the 'Quality Improvement Process'—QIP—in the plant.

"People didn't know anything about it. And purely by chance myself and the chief steward at the time, Pat Cullen, came across *Inside the Circle*. So we started reading it, and saying 'Holy smokes! This is what we're in the middle of, we never even realized it.'"

The "Corrective Action Teams" in the QIP watched videos on quality. Corrigan and the other union leaders began membership education through newsletters and one-on-one conversations.

"All very good," says Corrigan, "nobody was buying it so far. We were all enjoying the time off work. But at the same time, the danger was there and we certainly realized that."

Some union members said they did not want to attend the Corrective Action Team meetings, but management argued that under the management's rights clause, they had to.

The union told its members, "As soon as you get into the meeting, five words out of their mouth, you stand up and you say: 'Hold it! I'm not sure if my rights are being violated here. I'm not saying they are, but I want union representation.'" The company cancelled the meetings.

Still the company continued to look for a way to implement QIP. But, says Corrigan, "Every time they'd try something, we'd put a newsletter in. And eventually we had an educated membership. They knew what it was all about now."

By this point, Corrigan estimates, the company had spent a million and a half dollars on training, and still the QIP was going nowhere. Management decided to try something new: videotaping how each operation was done.

"So we had a meeting at the hall about this," Corrigan remembers, "and we instructed our brothers and sisters exactly what actions they should be taking. We don't cooperate. You don't allow yourself to be videotaped. You're not an actor.

"The company had a big to-do about it. They called the union leadership up, and said, 'What the hell do you think you people are playing at? Sending newsletters into the membership, getting them all riled up, while we're trying to improve management-labor relations here. We're trying to make this plant profitable. We're protecting your jobs. We're your friends—not your enemy. The enemy is Phillips Cables down the road. The enemy is Pirrelli Cables.' That's what they were telling us.

"We said, 'We don't want to put our brothers and sisters at Pirrelli out of jobs. And I met them at our

convention last week, and they told me they didn't want to put us out of a job either—so what've you got to say about that?"

Nevertheless, one day a video crew appeared at the plant. Management led the crew to a work area where two union members were busy at their jobs.

"There was a lot of weight put on their shoulders," says Corrigan. "They just stood there with the cameras on and the lights, and this delegation of management. 'Start working,' said the boss."

The two workers stood there a moment and then, says Corrigan, one of them said, "I'm not refusing to work. I'm refusing to act. I'm not refusing to work, I'm exercising my right to protest an invasion of my privacy. Furthermore, you're not going to steal my skills, they belong to me. I sell them to you for me to perform in the workplace at a price negotiated by the union. But they're not yours to steal away so that you can take them someplace else and exploit other workers." Management suspended those two brothers indefinitely.

The two fired workers were led out of the plant, but even before they had been thrown off the property, says Corrigan, "The whole plant shut down, every operation."

Now the bosses went around, with their video crew in tow, and approached every worker, one by one, and told them the same thing: "Start working." And, Corrigan says, "Every single one answered, 'We're not refusing to work. We're exercising our right to protest. Reinstatement of our brothers who you have unjustly suspended.'"

"Every person in the plant they went round, and then they sent us all home."

That was the Wednesday day shift. The same thing happened Wednesday afternoon. Every worker showed up but refused to work until the fired brothers were reinstated.

"Thursday, all three shifts, same thing happened," says Corrigan. "Everyone came to work. They didn't take the day off or anything like that. They didn't shy away from the issue. They confronted it."

Friday morning all the managers stood waiting outside the plant gate taking names. "Are you coming to work?" they said.

"Have you reinstated our brothers?" asked the union members.

"If you're not here to work, get off the premises," said the bosses. And they wrote down the names of the workers in their notebooks.

"And we were all lined up outside the gate," Corrigan recalls, "and as every person went up and reported for work and walked back out we all cheered. Never have I felt such solidarity in our local."

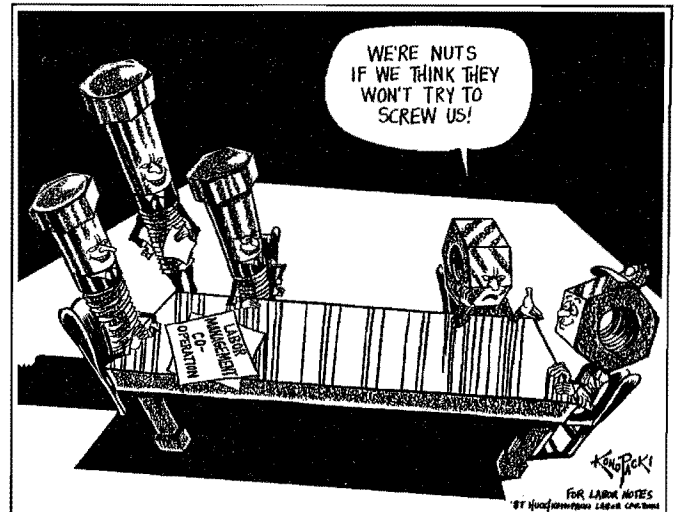
The company then sued the local for a loss of three days production at the rate of \$600,000 a day, for a total of \$1.8 million. The union was served with a cease and desist order from the Labor Relations Board.

After a lengthy debate among the members, says Corrigan, the union decided to return to work. And when the hearing was held before the Labor Relations Board, the matter was thrown out because the workers

had already returned to their jobs.

It was then very close to contract negotiations, and, says Corrigan, "We got a good contract, because they knew they had a militant union on their hands now. We hadn't had a strike for thirty years, they thought we were apathetic, complacent."

"We got all the suspensions dropped, we got the charges against the union for \$1.8 million withdrawn, and we got a good contract. And in January of last



year, they called myself and brother Cullen in, and they said, 'There's a truck outside there, a flatbed truck, and every sign and every board that we have with the quality program on it is on the back of that truck and it's going out of this plant. It didn't work.'"

So the truck carried away the last remnants of the QIP program. But after some months of peace and quiet, says Corrigan, "We hear that they're going to start doing it again, they're starting to come in with recognition programs."

Know Your Consultant

In 1984 management on the Burlington Northern (BN) railroad announced that they were going to create a "corporate culture" program which would end the adversarial relationship between union and management. Cindy Burke, president of Local 1310 of the Transportation Communications International Union, tells how she and her co-workers threw a switch that sidelined the program.

First came research. "The person BN had hired to direct this program was someone named Thomas Matthews," says Burke. "Members of my local did a little background check and found that Matthews had been hired directly from Continental Airlines, where he had been the second in command behind Lorenzo in busting the Pilots and Machinists unions there."

As head of Continental's program, they learned, Matthews had convinced the pilots' union to grant \$70 million in concessions—and then the company engineered a bankruptcy. Then, with bankruptcy as the excuse, he forced the pilots to agree to "Emergency

Work Rules" which included ending seniority provisions, changing the grievance procedure, and wage and benefit cuts.

Burke's local invited all the unions on the BN line to a meeting to discuss how to respond to the corporate culture program. "It was small," Burke says, "about seven or eight people there." The group formed the Intercraft Association of Minnesota (ICAM) and decided to publish a newsletter which they called *Straight Track*, a take-off on the company newsletter called *On Track*.

That first issue of *Straight Track*, around 500 copies, was based on interviews with officials from the pilots' union at Continental. The pilots explained just what the "corporate culture" was all about. Matthews had set one union against another, Pilots against Machinists, to divide and conquer. Eventually the unions were broken.

The company meanwhile went ahead with its program, setting up corporate culture committees at various terminals. "But during this period of time they cut 20,000 jobs," says Burke. "They were making a constant attempt to gut the work rules of various unions, so they were very easy to attack on that. The point that we hit on time and time again was that corporate culture means more job cuts, it means less training and a deterioration in safety, which will result in accidents."

Burlington Northern began to organize meetings to convince workers of the corporate culture, with various high ranking officials of the railroad and Matthews. Burke remembers, "Matthews would come and give a presentation. We leafleted the meetings with the exposé of his record, and the effect was astounding. Matthews himself was not prepared for it, and grabbed a copy of the newspaper and read it during the break. Of course, since everything we said was true, he could not deny it, and it immediately changed the whole character of those meetings."

"The last series of meetings that he held was in Minneapolis. We organized people to go and take him on from the floor, and the meetings were just a rout. At the fifth meeting he completely lost his head, started screaming at the audience and did not show up for the sixth meeting."

"Shortly after that the railroad announced that he had gone back to Eastern Air Lines. He is still in Florida and played a very prominent part in the attempt to break the union at Eastern."

Another one of the ICAM organizers, Lynn Henderson, says, "I think our biggest success was defeating the whole corporate culture program. They dropped the whole thing. They don't even mention it any more."

See Chapter 6 for more on ICAM.

Using the Law

Under certain limited circumstances, it may be possible for a union to resist a cooperation program by using labor law. (This is directed to those who live

in the United States. The Canadian situation will be different.)

At the Labor Notes Team Concept School held in January 1990 in Ann Arbor, Michigan, attorney Ellis Boal explained, "This is one area where the law is on our side." Under the National Labor Relations Act passed in 1935, "the company cannot assist or dominate a labor organization," Boal explained. "There have been 13 Supreme Court decisions upholding this, and all were unanimous, there was no dissent."

Quality circles and teams are a form of labor organization if they talk about working conditions and claim to represent the workers. When the employer provides funds and facilities for these organizations or otherwise controls their activities, they may simply be illegal in situations where there is no union, or in situations where there is a union and the union protests the existence of the circles.

The law does permit a union to agree to a quality circle or team arrangement, but if the union decides to back out, the company may not continue the circles or teams over the union's objection.

Chemical Workers File Unfair Labor Practice Charge

In 1985 Dupont introduced a quality circle program at its Chambers Works in Deepwater, New Jersey. The Chemical Workers Association, an independent union, used an unfair labor practice charge at the National Labor Relations Board to get rid of the program. Richard Morey, vice-president of the union, explains how it was done. At the time he was a member of the negotiating committee.

"The plant makes hundreds of chemicals and intermediaries and engages in research," says Morey. "There are 2,300 workers in the bargaining unit. It is an open shop situation, but 88 percent of the eligible workers are in the union."

In 1985 the company wanted a cooperation program and told the union that they were beginning to train managers and would train workers next. "The union," says Morey, "asked that some union people be sent to the management school, before the workers' training began. The union people came back from the school with books and films and we turned them over to our lawyers for examination."

Meanwhile, union activists went to the Rutgers University Labor Education Center and met with Dr. Norman Eiger and Mike Parker of Labor Notes, who was speaking there. After discussing the company's plan with Eiger and Parker, the workers decided, Morey says, "If we didn't have parity on committees it would mean concessions."

In 1986 the company announced that it was making the program mandatory. Morey believes that the former union officials and the company may have privately reached an informal agreement to allow the program to go ahead. The company then began to promote its program of "Personal Effectiveness Training," promising it would improve workers' lives at

home—and even save marriages.

Next, the company announced it was going to choose a “core design team.” “We told them we would pick the team, but they would not accept it,” says Morey. “Mr. Shinn, the manager, said, ‘Get on the bus, or get the hell out of the way.’”

The company proceeded to choose the core team, including two union executive board members who would not have been the union’s choices. The eleven-member core team became the program’s facilitators and teachers.

At that point, Morey explains, “We went to the NLRB and won.” The NLRB ruled that the core team were supervisors. The union expelled the two board members who were on the core team.

The union challenged the program, but the company would not relent. Says Morey, “They declared an impasse, which they interpreted as meaning that they could go ahead. And they did.”

The new program began to move onto the shop floor. The company held “tool box meetings.” “Workers were giving others ‘work direction,’” says Morey. “Workers were playing boss and ratting on each other. They fooled with the work rules. We used contract language and grieved on pay rates. We arbitrated several cases and won some.

“We objected to the entire system. We said what walks like a duck and talks like a duck must be a duck. But the company said we would have to grieve each case, one at a time.”

Next the company came into Jackson Labs, where Morey worked.

“They said they were going to form a committee, taking a diagonal slice from management to workers in all crafts, by volunteers. The union objected verbally and filed an NLRB charge that the company was unilaterally changing conditions. This charge was subsequently amended several times.

“We monitored every meeting in the Jackson Lab design team. We would object to the meeting, saying that this is an illegal assembly and a management violation of federal labor law. We called upon them to disband. When they did not, the union stayed to object and observe the composition and subject matter of the meeting. At times management would take the ‘troublemakers’ out of these meetings.

“The ‘design team’ in the labs was made up 50 percent plus 1 of management,” says Morey, “and most of the other 49 percent was made up of non-union workers.

“In one meeting we asked, ‘Would you continue to discuss bargainable issues without the presence of the union?’ They answered, ‘Yes.’ We made a note of that and amended our NLRB charge.”

At first the NLRB region refused the charge. The union had to appeal several times. Finally, on December 22, 1989, Judge Arline Pacht ordered the company to cease and desist with its program, on the grounds that the teams were a company union. Dupont did not appeal and so Judge Pacht’s ruling became the decision of the NLRB (although without setting a precedent).

Working from Within

In many workplaces, it will not be possible to completely stop a cooperation program as in the examples described above. Management’s persistence, pressure from higher levels of the union, or disagreement within the membership—all may mean that a program continues. Ignoring the program is the worst possible course. Instead the union needs to become deeply involved in the program to push its own agenda.

The union should keep in mind that if it actually implements a strong strategy for taking over a joint program, management is likely to lose interest in it. Here’s an example:

At General Motors’ Truck and Bus complex in Pontiac, Michigan, management claimed it wanted a “partnership” with the union to build a new truck model in one plant. All employees of plant 6 were to receive three weeks of training—“and they offered the union a piece of that action,” remembers Mike Caverly. Caverly is a member of UAW Local 594 and now polices GM’s Quality Network for the union. “The local had wanted to do more member education and so our local leadership thought, ‘Why not, if we can get management to pay for it?’

“Education Director Bob Schroeder and Ralph Isenbarg and myself worked up a three-day training package. Management of course had reserved the right to review it. So we sat them down and we got through about one-and-a-half videos before the plug got pulled. First we showed ‘The Inheritance,’ and we were about ten minutes into ‘The Great Sitdown’ when Gary Smith, the general superintendent said, ‘This ain’t going to get us where we want to go.’

“So we said, ‘Just where is it you folks want to go?’ But we knew, of course—they just wanted us there in the training to lend credibility to *their* message.” The “joint” training Local 594 had envisioned—with each side presenting its point of view—never came about.

But Local 594 leaders liked their own orientation program so much that they shortened it to a one-day session and called members out of the plant on lost time, 30 at a time, to attend the classes. According to President Don Douglas, this education program is one of the reasons that his local is strong. When the union decided to fight back against GM’s attempt to unilaterally install the team concept in plant 6, the strike vote complex-wide was 97.6 percent. And GM backed down completely after just three days on strike.²

Taking Over Teams

At another General Motors assembly plant, in Wentzville, Missouri, team concept was a fact of life from the time the plant opened in 1983. The union officials, says Peter Downs, a trimmer at the plant, “just pretended it wasn’t there.” Rather than boycotting the team structure, says Downs, some shop floor activists who belonged to the New Directions Movement

within the UAW "made an effort to take over the team meetings.

"The first effort was to use the team meetings as small union meetings and bring up problems from the workers' point of view, instead of letting management dominate the meetings. Individuals in different teams would bring up things on their own, relevant to the area in which they were working. There was no effort to present the same issue in teams throughout the plant, except in the case of line speedup. Management responded to that by giving more instructions to the Team Coordinators (TCs) on how to run their team meetings, and giving them a whole load of material to read through, material that took more than half an hour when team meetings only last a half hour."

Then, Downs explains, the New Directions group decided "to get some good militant union people to run for TC positions whenever an opening came up. In several areas we were able to get such people elected as Team Coordinator. There was an attitude change on the workers' part. They wanted to elect people who wouldn't snitch on them to the boss, and that's what they felt they accomplished."

There is evidence, says Downs, that management was unhappy about losing control over some TCs. Foremen campaigned hard for their preferred candidates, even offering bribes. And when the contract expired, the company put a demand on the table to do away with elected TCs.

Downs believes that in plants that are stuck with the team concept, taking over coordinator positions and trying to turn the teams into arms of the union is a strategy that should be pursued.

Aerospace Workers Develop Own Program

One of the biggest advocates of the team concept is the U.S. Defense Department. It has been known to require its contractors to adopt "Total Quality Management" (TQM). Management at the four General Dynamics divisions in San Diego, which make missiles and other military hardware for the Pentagon, introduced TQM without the cooperation of Machinists (IAM) Local 1125. Union leaders felt that they could not get rid of the program altogether, but developed a plan for an independent, pro-union way for the union and members to relate to it. Paul Pechter, who was editor of the local's newspaper and later elected business representative, tells the story:

"In the spring of 1989 our business representatives and elected negotiating committee attended a special quarterly meeting with General Dynamics corporate management from St. Louis. At this meeting some aspects of TQM were laid out and the union was asked to cooperate in implementing the program. Our union leadership deferred any decision pending further clarification.

"The company went ahead and unilaterally started to implement TQM without cooperation from the union.

"In a number of areas, they started TQM committees. They sounded like quality circles but with an

added twist. The company wanted these committees to make recommendations in areas usually left to management—in one instance a TQM committee was asked to recommend discipline on a work performance problem. It was the union's view that the company was playing games. Their aim was to make the committee look good and plant the notion in our members' minds that they can do better with TQM than with the union grievance procedure. The BA's were furious, they challenged the legality of bypassing the grievance procedure and put a stop to the practice.

"TQM committees were springing up in assembly and were already in operation to cut inspection down to bare bones. Workers were being interviewed by supervision and told they now 'own the job' and had to 'estimate time needed to complete job.' They eliminated over 8,000 inspection operations.

"They were also showing a propaganda film to office workers, promising them a new dignity and trust in the relationship between workers and management. The reports were that only a handful of our members were not being taken in.

"At a stewards meeting TQM was discussed quite a bit. Generally the sentiment was that it was just another GD trick, but many stewards were afraid that unless we had a plan, a significant number of our members would be fooled into supporting the program. The leadership told the stewards that those in areas where TQM committees were forming should get onto the committees as a first step in getting control.

"But a problem was raised that participation by stewards would give the company ammunition to say the union is cooperating. People said that if we did get onto the committees it should be with specified demands about how those committees are to be organized and how they should function. So the leadership postponed any specific plans until after a planned team concept educational for our leadership and stewards."

Shortly thereafter, the local brought in two labor educators who were knowledgeable about the dangers of cooperation programs. It held two all-day education sessions, the first for the business representatives and other top officers, the second for the 160 stewards. Out of those meetings came a Code of Conduct for Union Members, a plan for educating the membership, guidelines for union involvement in TQM committees, a plan for the role of stewards under TQM, and some suggested contract language needed in response to TQM (see box).

The result, says Pechter, is that "all they have are offshoots from quality circles in some departments, it's uneven. So it's on the back burner, formally speaking.

"There is evidence that they were concerned about the amount of resistance. Also they were not organized themselves. Both those things contributed to the result that they couldn't put the program together, that they were not able to implement a really hard-nosed cooperation program."

Like other unionists interviewed for this chapter, Pechter notes that this struggle is far from over.

IAM 1125's Plan for Dealing with TQM

Code of Conduct for Union Members

Union members shall not:

- allow violations of contract at TQM meetings
- participate in the disciplining of union members
- pass on skills and knowledge to management
- complain about other union members in front of management
- support or encourage job elimination
- discuss union business in front of management
- take any oaths of secrecy

Union members shall:

- insist on union steward presence at all TQM meetings
- insist on democratic procedures when involved in TQM committees
- maintain written minutes of all TQM meetings and uphold open disclosure of items discussed
- take problems to the union steward

Education Plan

- written communications (newsletter, handbills)
- lunchtime meetings in plant
- union surveys and questionnaires
- union videos, t-shirts, buttons, mottos
- hotline
- form union TQM Strategy Committee
- one-on-one canvassing with members
- bilingual materials
- union orientation for new members
- research other plants who have TQM

Contract Language Needed In Response to TQM

- no layoffs due to TQM, restrict offloading and subcontracting
- job impact evaluation for every TQM solution proposed
- new technology language, retraining, advance notice of impact on jobs and health and safety
- union have 50% decision making power including veto power over all TQM projects
- modify "rights of management" clause
- maintain seniority, classifications and labor grades
- save custodians and inspectors
- union input into training programs
- anti-monitoring language
- make TQM participation voluntary
- monetary compensation for increased productivity
- post minutes of all TQM meetings
- right to caucus for union members on TQM committees
- pre-planning for union caucus on company time
- right to quit committees

Guidelines for Union Members on TQM Committees

- union decide method of choosing union members for committee
- union co-chair committee
- union keep own minutes
- union input into agenda for meetings
- no secrecy
- right to call meetings
- right to select consultants

"Management is still making moves in the plant," he says, "like proposing 'work cells' in the machine shop." He also notes that a useful model for participation in cooperation schemes has been developed by the IAM International, "which may hold promise for turning company programs into union worker empowerment programs."

Educate the Members

Canadian Auto Workers Local 1967 at McDonnell Douglas Canada fought a successful campaign against the team concept and played a role in developing the CAW's national policy against such management schemes. Today the CAW has a national education program specifically on the team concept.

In April 1989 management called the Local 1967 officials into a room and explained that they were going to begin a TQMS (Total Quality Management System) in the plant at once. "The next day," says President Nick De Carlo, "we told them that if they went ahead with that program there would be war on the shop floor. They backed off and agreed not to implement it."

"We realized that was just the first skirmish, because when we got into negotiations in the fall there would be a real problem. So we set about educating ourselves. We called a meeting of our officers and went through a basic education of what team concept was all about. Part of that was coming to the Labor Notes conference [in June 1989]; part of it was going through our union which was developing a program in the Research Department on team concept. And we began to organize for the negotiations."

There was a problem, however, says De Carlo. "The Canadian Auto Workers [national union] didn't have a clear position. Though some locals were taking on the fight, in effect it was actually drifting toward accepting the team concept; in a number of places it was sort of slipping in on the shop floors."

The leadership of Local 1967 decided to make a fight within the union to reject the team concept. "We had an Aerospace Council, we took a position there against the team concept and got unanimous support, and sent the position to the National Executive Board. Our local plant chairperson along with Quebec members of the Aerospace Council went to the Quebec Council, and they took a unanimous position against the team concept, and sent it to the National Executive Board."

"One of the advantages we had was the way our union is set up. Many of the people on the National Executive Board are local union leaders. In our case the plant chairperson is on the National Executive Board, and he took the position to the Board, and there was a major discussion. The Board adopted a position against team concept."

"There was a meeting called in September of the CAW Council. The way it works is the president is supposed to report policy and policy changes to the rank and file delegates every four months, and it was

debated there. The Board took a position against the team concept, and we got unanimous endorsement from the Council."

That position statement, says Dave Robertson, who works in the CAW Research Department, said that "management's goals are not ours, and that there's a clear difference. They're asking for 'partnership,' but people belong to the union not to be partners with managers, but to have an independent voice in the workplace."

"Our statement also criticized some union practices. It took on those situations 'in which management takes advantage of a union leadership which takes time off outside the workplace—while getting paid—when they should be in the workplace representing workers.' That type of practice has allowed management to sucker them. The union has also opposed the development of joint appointees to a whole series of new jobs—'communication officers' or whatever. So it was very clear that locals shouldn't be participating in that."

"Once the Council passed and endorsed that statement, then a series of Local Union Discussion Leaders, or LUDLs, were trained for four days to teach a course in the local unions." Each LUDL uses a detailed instructor's manual; the course includes transparencies for an overhead projector and a thick notebook of information, with copies of the companies' own team training materials. "Now that course," explains Robertson, "is being taught in all our regional schools. Special programs are being put on for local leadership. It provides people an opportunity to start talking about what's going on in the workplace and how to respond. The last session of the course, section eight, is on building a strategy. It provides a structured exercise on understanding the workplace dynamic and figuring out ways we can start responding."

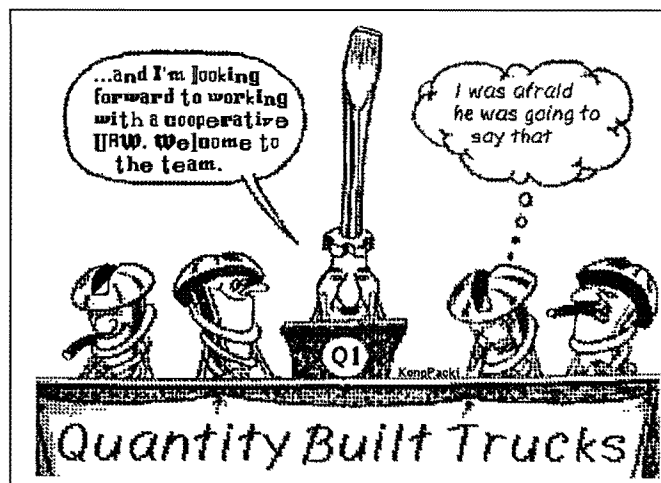
Appropriately, the first real test of the new policy came at McDonnell Douglas. "McDonnell Douglas promoted team concept prior to the recent round of collective bargaining," says Robertson. "The local leadership responded by using a version of this course, which was still in the development stage. They brought in the whole steward body, and for a Saturday we worked with the whole steward body on what it meant. So then those stewards went back out into the workplace. That led up to a collective bargaining position that said no to teams."

"So at the table teams were resisted, and finally the company took it off the bargaining table. And one of the chief bargainers for the company, after losing everything on teams, made a statement. 'Well,' he said, 'maybe a lesson from this is that one of the ways we get cooperation is to improve working conditions and pay and pensions.'"

Earlier, another CAW local, 303 at the GM van plant in Scarborough, had come up with its own education program for combatting jointness. Committee person Herman Rosenfeld thinks their course, which was given to the entire population of the plant, was an eye-opener. Among other things, local instructors used group games like those used in company team concept

training.

"We could give people an idea of what it's like to be put in the position of trying to help management bail out," explains Rosenfeld. "While I think we had a big effect with this course, I don't want to overestimate this effect either. Because people can hear some good things and have a discussion, but if it doesn't jibe with their experience, they tend to forget it. People's participation in struggle has to be there as well."



The UAW New Directions caucus at the Ford truck plant in St. Paul, Minnesota redrew a cartoon by Mike Konopacki to send their own anti-cooperation message.

Action Questions

1. What is management trying to achieve through a cooperation program?
2. What level of management is pushing it?
3. Do they want the program mainly in name (because higher management insists on it)?
4. Which elements do they really want and which are window dressing?
5. What is the nature of the program they are introducing?
 - a) Is it supposed to be about improving the quality of work life or is it specifically limited to productivity/quality?
 - b) Does it involve group meetings separate from the production process or is it a reorganization of production?
 - c) Are group/team members appointed, elected or volunteer?
 - d) Is the program accompanied by major changes in working conditions or contract items?
6. Have they introduced it in other plants or offices? What have been the results?
7. Has management already begun to introduce changes which will lead to a new system?
8. How will these changes affect fundamental union issues such as: job security, seniority, job classifications, contracting out?
9. Who will the system help? Who will it hurt?
10. How is the company trying to reach your members?

11. How are the members reacting?
12. How good is the union's communication with members now?
13. If this system were in place, how would it affect the union's ability to communicate with members? How would it affect the ability to defend the members' interests?
14. How does the union leadership stand on the issue? Is the leadership divided?
15. Can the union simply refuse to accept the program?

16. Must the union accept the program, and then attempt to undermine it from within?
17. Are there elements in the program which can be turned to the union's advantage?

Notes

1. The citation of the case is *E I DuPont De Nemours & Co*, NLRB Case No 4 CA 16801 (Pacht, 12/22/89).
2. See Chapter 22 of *Choosing Sides: Unions and the Team Concept* for the story of Local 594's fight against the team concept.



Steward's Corner — May 1989

How We Used Solidarity To Beat the Company's QWL Scheme

by Randy McSorley

Our company, International Paper's Kaukauna, Wisconsin mill, introduced a Quality of Work Life (QWL) program which they called "Q1." Early in our search for information, we found *Inside the Circle*, by Mike Parker of Labor Notes. Parker's book confirmed our suspicions about QWL. We contacted employees of other companies and found that when a QWL program is accepted, the power of the bargaining unit is weakened. We set out to destroy the program.

The problem with destroying a Q1 program is that these programs are built on positive ideas—Quality, Teamwork, and Recognition. To educate our people about Q1, we began a series of articles in our local's newsletter, which continues to this day, describing QWL programs and their dangers. The newsletters were an instant success. The employees gained insight into the true motives behind Q1, and they were willing to fight it.

The biggest reason companies embrace a quality program is that it puts the company in control of every situation. Although the employee is led to believe that he or she is making a decision, it is actually management that is steering the team; the solution to any problem will be management's solution. Control is essential to a successful quality program, and if the company's control is undermined the entire program is jeopardized.

Red Shirt Friday

To counter the company's control, and as a show of solidarity, we and other IP mills initiated a "blue shirt Monday" and a "red shirt Friday." On Monday of every week our members would come to work wearing a blue shirt. They would give the company a good day's work and demonstrate to them the full potential of the union workforce. On Friday the members would arrive wearing red shirts with the word "Solidarity" emblazoned on the chest.

As blue Monday represented the blue collar work ethic, "red Friday" represented our resolve to battle corporate greed, enhance our own feeling of solidarity, and show the company our determination

to "work safely."

As the weeks passed, the company showed signs of exasperation as production rose on Monday and fell on Friday. They made the connection with blue shirt and red shirt, but were unable to do anything about it. The company, and the members themselves, were made to recognize that control rested in the hands of the union, not the company.

Just Say Nothing

The company had set up Q1 training sessions and demanded mandatory attendance. Our initial approach was to have our members shout about the gross mismanagement of our company and the hypocrisy of management's view of quality.

The company was shaken, but undeterred. It dawned on us that our members' complaints at the meetings were actually encouraging the company. Management claimed to be enjoying the "feedback" they were receiving at the mandatory Q1 meetings, and considered it progress, essential to opening a line of communication which would, they hoped, end in our acceptance of the Q1 program.

When the union realized that a vocal membership was not the answer to defeating Q1, we urged silence. Modifying the "Just Say No" campaign that the UPIU had taken against International Paper, we distributed a flyer urging members to "Just Say Nothing" at the Q1 meetings. The headline said "Nothing Can Stop Q1," and the text explained how *doing nothing* at the meetings would foil the company's plans. [See the leaflet on page 41.]

It worked. Members enjoyed making their statement against Q1 without saying a word. Company facilitators felt frustrated and useless. Members showed up at the meetings wearing their red Solidarity t-shirts, and remained mute while the company facilitators tried in vain to encourage participation.

On the job, Q1 became a synonym for company mismanagement. Every time a supervisor made a bad decision, or an employee received discipline, one of

our members would point and say "Q1 in action." The company became hesitant to use the name "Q1" for fear of ridicule and rejection.

After a few weeks of this, the company halted the mandatory meetings and tried to regroup. Weeks later, they resumed the meetings, with low-level management as facilitators instead of upper management. To the company's dismay, they were again greeted with silence. Many of the company's facilitators were openly critical of Q1. The program was in shambles.

The company did not discontinue Q1, however. The next wave was the "task team."

The Task Team

On one occasion, a department supervisor approached a man working on a core-cutting machine. The supervisor told him that they were considering purchasing a new core cutter, and wanted all the employees' input. What kind of machine to buy, where to put it, and what to do with the old machine were all to be answered by the employees at a meeting, working as a team.

The core-cutter operator thought this was a good idea, until a few hours later when a shift foreman approached him and told him what kind of core cutter the company was going to buy, where it would be

placed, and what was going to happen to the old one. If he hadn't been inadvertently tipped off by the foreman, the operator would have been led into choosing exactly the solutions the company had already decided.

We publicized this incident, and dealt this facet of Q1 a serious blow.

Recently, the company has tried to insinuate Q1 into the safety program. They proposed safety t-shirts which would replace our red Solidarity shirts. They wanted to design a safety program using the "team concept," and they encouraged members to turn people in for disciplinary action when they were not obeying all safety rules. They never used the name "Q1" at these meetings, but it was there just the same, flipcharts and all. Our members were outraged that something as important to us as job safety would become a Q1 gimmick.

The company will not give up. They have been ordered by IP to institute a QWL program, and they will try everything they can to force it down our throats. But the company is also aware that the union will not give in. Our members will recognize their Q1 program when it rears its head, and will fight it in any form it takes.

[At the time this article appeared in *Labor Notes*, Randy McSorley was chairman of UPIU Local 147. Today he is area vice-president of UPIU Local 20, created when Locals 147 and 20 merged. For more on this local's activities, see Chapter 20.]



Steward's Corner — February 1986

Keep Union United in Quitting QWL Program

by Mike Parker

In October 1985, United Steelworkers Local 1033 at LTV's Chicago South Works withdrew from Labor-Management Participation Teams (LMPT), the cooperation program in the steel industry. The local's executive board took the action after four months of intensive discussion within the union and after management's rejection of proposals to put the program on a solid basis.

An LMPT program had been operating in the plant since 1983. But by 1985 many members were concerned that management was taking advantage of the union and using LMPT for its own ends. In May the grievance committee presented a petition to the executive board asking that LMPT be stopped if management closed the 10-inch and 21-inch mills.

The executive board decided not to withdraw at the time but to see if problems could be solved. The leadership began what President Maury Richards describes as a "period of intensive study and involvement in LMPT." The union replaced one of the full-time LMPT coordinators and increased union representation on the LMPT joint review committee. On July 25 the entire executive board, grievance committee, and top management held an all-day meeting with Sam Camens, who was in charge of LMPT for the USWA International.

Union Proposal

At the meeting union leaders made clear that company professions of cooperation in LMPT were meaningless while the company was refusing to answer grievances, continuing to contract out work, and combining and eliminating jobs. The union was not against cooperation but could not urge members to give ideas to management when management was using those ideas to eliminate jobs.

Following the meeting, the union drafted a proposal setting forth conditions for continued LMPT in the plant (see box) and gave the company 30 days to act. The company did take some action to reduce the backlog of grievances, but after almost two months, it was clear that the company had no intention of cooperating on job security. The union officially withdrew from LMPT.

From the time the issue came up, the union leadership made sure that the membership was brought into the discussion and that the union acted in a unified way. Individual officers made their views known in the union newspaper. Union leaders, particularly concerned about the 200 workers who were participating in LMPT groups, went to group meetings to explain the issues.

Local 1033's Conditions For Continuing LMPT

We do not believe that open communications, trust between labor and management, and the sharing of information, which is the basis of LMPT, should be confined to the program itself.

These types of improved relations must extend to all areas of Labor Relations in the plant if the program is to survive.

The Labor Agreement must be respected and its provisions lived up to...

I. Contractual Obligations

1. Resolution or processing the backlog of [grievances]...

2. The cessation of contracting out our work...

3. Open communication and an end to any obstacles that have prevented Grievors from meeting with superintendents...

II. Labor Relations

...the union will submit a list to the company of supervisors whose attitudes and behavior we consider to be detrimental to good labor relations... We expect the company to take firm action to correct the attitudes of any member of supervision incompatible with labor relations in the 1980's.

III. Job Security

If Labor-Management Participation is to succeed...steelworkers [must]...be able to go to work without the threats of job elimination or combinations hanging over our heads. The Union proposes that a Base Force Agreement be mutually negotiated...

Such an agreement would establish protected crew sizes in addition to work force levels based on normal levels of production...

Debate

After the union officially withdrew, management called large meetings of LMPT participants to try to mobilize them against the union leadership. The leadership went to these meetings. At one, members, top management, and union leaders participated in a three-hour debate on the problems in the plant.

There was some strong opposition in the local to withdrawing from the program. A number of the LMPT participants liked the program and did not want to see it connected with the issue of how the company was dealing with the union. The original LMPT coordinators tried to organize opposition to the union's position.

Nonetheless, Richards feels that most of the members supported the action. "We went to the membership every step of the way," he said. "When it was necessary we were able to make a clear break instead of dragging it out."

[Mike Parker is the author of *Inside the Circle: A Union Guide to QWL*.]

6. Reaching Out To Other Unions

Just as activists try to convince individual workers that they will have more strength if they join with other workers in a union, so they often have to convince individual local unions that they will have more strength if they unite with other unions. In the 1980's more than ever before, workers were pitted against each other as "competitiveness" became the employers' watchword. "Whipsawing"—an employer trying to get local unions to bid against each other for work—became common practice.

Sadly, many unions played the employers' game. Pattern contracts covering hundreds of thousands of workers were broken up. Rebuilding solidarity among workers from different workplaces, companies, and unions is one of the key issues of the 1990's.

It may seem strange to have to talk about cross-union cooperation when International unions, the AFL-CIO and its departments, state AFL-CIO organizations, and local Central Labor Councils supposedly exist for this purpose. In reality, many Internationals do not promote contact between locals, preferring communication to come from the top down. And many central labor bodies are inactive, conservative, or devoted almost exclusively to legislative politics.

Therefore union members will have to rebuild cross-union solidarity from the bottom up. These contacts should be both formal and informal, among both union officials and rank and file members.

Some unions already hold regular meetings of local officials who work in the same industry or for the same company, such as the UAW's Aerospace Conference or Chrysler Council. The AFL-CIO also sponsors meetings by industry and some coordinated bargaining of different unions at the same company.

Such meetings may or may not be structured to deal with the issues which concern you. If not, get the names and phone numbers of others at the meeting and call them to arrange informal discussions.

Cross-Union Contacts for a Contract Campaign

Our first story shows how even small locals with limited resources can make good use of cross-union contacts. In this case the local used the phone and the U.S. mail to make contacts within the same company that should have been there all along but that no one had bothered with before.

Brandon Weber was the president of USW Local 3844 in Kansas City, at a 200-person shop that manufactured electrical meter boxes. The company, Milbank Manufacturing, also had smaller plants in Kokomo, Indiana and El Dorado, Arkansas. They were represented by different unions, had different contracts and expiration dates, and there was little communication among the locals. Weber and some others in the local wanted to change this.

"This started when I was not an officer, I was an assembly line worker," Weber remembers. "It was the summer of 1987. We had heard rumors that the Kokomo plant was on strike and they were going to set up picket lines outside of our shop, and we were trying to figure out what to do about it. Our local officials at that time called the Steelworkers staff rep and asked him what we should do if they set up a picket line. He said we should cross it. Of course nobody tried to contact Kokomo to find out what the hell was going on. So I did.

"I got the number through the state AFL-CIO in Indiana. They told me that the plant was in the Sheet Metal Workers and the local number and I got their phone number from information.

"So I called their B.A., who was really supportive. He told me what was going on. We had vacation scheduled for July, two weeks plant shutdown, and they wanted a lot of people to work overtime during that vacation. We organized to try and keep people from doing that, made sure people knew they were

doing the other plant's work when they were on strike. And it was somewhat successful.

"Then we ran a rank and file slate to challenge the local officials and won. I was elected president. We knew that negotiations were coming up in October of 1988 so I called the chief steward in the Kokomo plant. We talked about management and some of their tricks, and how those people organized when they were on strike. We talked about how the company acts toward certain grievances. He said that our local president had called him a few years previous, got scared and hung up.

"I also found the number for the El Dorado, Arkansas plant, which was organized by the IBEW, the same way, through the AFL-CIO. I talked to the woman who was the secretary-treasurer, the top officer. Both those people, I asked for support when we got into negotiations. I asked that they send us anything they had from previous negotiations, company proposals, union proposals, contracts, wage schedules, everything. We found out that the El Dorado plant was lower-wage than ours but the Kokomo plant was higher.

"We had one negotiating session. That evening I immediately contacted officers from the respective locals and told them what happened. Got some information, what did they think, did they go through the same thing, same proposals thrown at them?

"We posted the wages of the Kokomo people in the plant. Immediately upon entering the room of the next negotiating session the company officials started asking us why we did this, why are we waging a contract campaign? 'If you want to wage a contract campaign,' they said, 'then we will too.' Our International Rep agreed with the company, at the table while we were sitting there.

"So we called a caucus. We told the company to leave the room so we could talk. The five officers not including the International Rep decided that we would keep doing what we were doing.

"Our first round of buttons was timed for the first round of negotiations. They said, 'LOCAL 3844 NEEDS MORE—Wages, Benefits, Safety and Health,' and we had 90-95% of our people wearing them. Then we came up with the idea of asking folks in Kokomo and El Dorado to wear buttons for us. They said, 'We Stand With Local 3844, Kansas City.' They had 75% of the people in both plants wearing them; in fact, not enough buttons were sent because everybody wore them that got them.

"Meantime, the company officials in Kokomo were telling the steward and other folks in the plant that we were communists. They responded by giving buttons to the management people. The Kokomo workers were telling the company officials, if Kansas City goes on strike then we're going to walk too.

"We sent copies of all the company's proposals and ours to the Kokomo people and the El Dorado people so they knew what the company was trying to get over on us. The financial information on the company—we couldn't get a lot because it was privately held—but we sent that to the other locals too.

"Along with this we were holding contract information meetings and we came up with another button for our own people and had 95% participation in that. We had a rank and file contract committee of 20 people to get the information out after each session. [For more on Local 3844's open negotiations, see Chapter 8 on Contract Campaigns.]

"The upshot was that we got the best contract we could get without striking.

"Currently, the Kokomo plant has been locked out. Our local contributed \$500 and asked the membership not to work overtime. Our plant is sending one of our people there for a support rally; it'll be the first time there's been face to face contact between them."

A Cross-Union Coalition at Miller Brewing

Local unions at Miller Brewing Co. have established a coalition in which representatives of different unions sit in on each other's local negotiations. Floyd Beck, who works in Albany, Georgia and is a former vice-president of Machinists (IAM) Local 2699, explains how this came about.

"We watched Miller plant management meet every six months," says Beck, "and come out of those meetings and pit one plant against another. We said, 'Let's get smart.' So we reversed it. Now our locals meet every six months and communicate with each other to prevent whipsawing."

In 1983 the AFL-CIO Brewery Conference began to work on cooperation at six Miller locations: Albany; Milwaukee; Fulton, New York; Eden, North Carolina; Fort Worth, Texas; and Irwindale, California. The unions involved included the Machinists, the Steelworkers, the Auto Workers and the Teamsters.

"It took four years to get the coalition together," says Beck. It is made up of brewers and suppliers, including the can and bottle plants. Every three to six months delegates meet for about three days. They exchange information about contracts, arbitration cases, discharges, and plant rumors.

The coalition has been particularly important, says Beck, in helping the locals respond to the team concept. "One important plant involved in the coalition was the Fulton Brewery. Originally they jumped on board the team concept 100 percent and stayed with it for approximately three years. Then they discovered the flaws and totally withdrew in November of 1989 at their contract renewal. The suggestions of the Fulton local to the labor coalition have been very successful at the other Miller locations."

Perhaps the most important result of the coalition has been the cooperation in contract negotiations. "As each local's contract is renewed, members of the labor coalition from each location attend and actually sit in on the discussions of the other local's contract. Miller at first started to refuse to allow the coalition's guests to sit in, but was advised not to do so by their

legal staff, since no language was there to support their position. The local could have filed labor charges for failure to deal in good faith. We control who sits in; they've got no say-so as long as there's not any lost time.

"It was very obvious that our presence there destroyed management's game plan, which basically had been matching other plants against each other. It also eliminated the false rumors. The other advantage was that each local heard and saw what was in store for them in the form of concessions when their contract was due to expire. This gave the locals advance warning to establish a good defense.

"The end goal of the labor coalition is to achieve a master contract with all the local contracts expiring at the same time at all the Miller locations. Miller, of course, is deeply upset about the coalition.

"The locals at Miller Brewing Company locations strongly recommend: If your locals have not established a labor coalition, start one immediately—it does work."

Representatives to such a coalition should be invited from all plant locations and unions involved. You may also want to invite the unions at supplier plants. At your first meeting you will want each person to bring multiple copies of their local union contract and a brief written description of the workplace and the union.

Boston City Hospital Unions Work Together

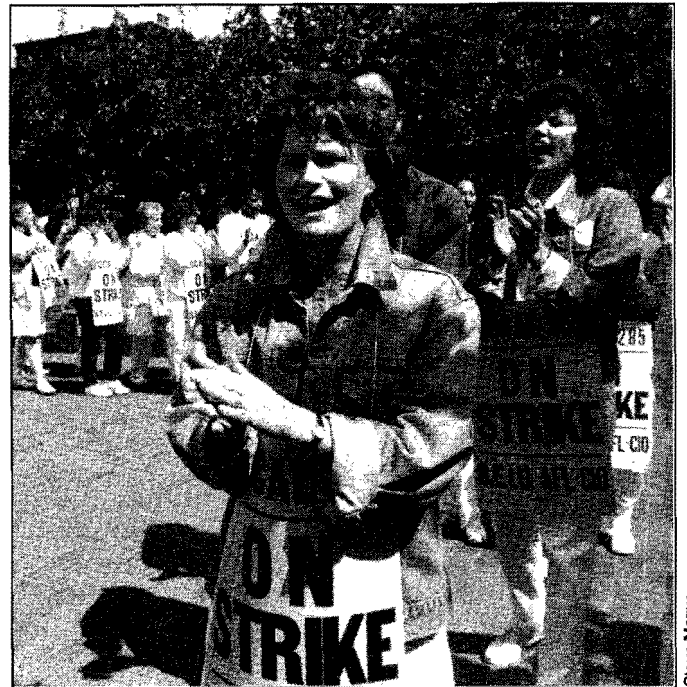
Sometimes when the workers in a single workplace are divided among different unions, those unions become rivals. At Boston City Hospital they are allies. A joint steering committee meets every week, and in their last contracts, they all worked together in a city-wide campaign.

The unions involved are AFSCME 1489 representing some technical titles, maintenance, kitchen, and nurses aides; SEIU 285 representing the RNs, LPNs, and the clerical and technical unit; and the House Officers Association, the union of intern and resident physicians. However, the coalition is even broader than this. AFSCME negotiates with other locals representing other city employees, and SEIU 285 represents other clerical and technical workers in other city departments. Altogether about 6,000 city employees were working together on their contracts in 1987.

Marcia Hams is the Administrator for the House Officers Association. She explains how their coalition contract campaign worked: "Each unit had its own demands; we didn't have the same wage demands, for instance. We didn't try to coordinate bargaining to that degree. But all of our contracts were up June 30, 1987, and starting in the winter we began to do joint publicity. We had joint rallies, we had a tent city on city hall plaza to call attention to the fact that we could barely afford housing because the cost of living was so

high."

Besides a joint steering committee of all the unions in a multi-union workplace, another possibility is an inter-union stewards council. The stewards might meet together to discuss the struggle with management from the shop floor viewpoint. They could hold



Boston City Hospital workers struck in 1986.

joint campaigns to get an obnoxious supervisor fired, or a common campaign for removing asbestos from the building, or the like. This is the structure that exists in British factories, where stewards long have been the militant backbone of the union movement.

Newspapers Unite the Crafts

A Coalition of Railroad Unions

Workers on the Burlington Northern (BN) railroad have formed not only a union coalition—the Intercraft Association of Minnesota (ICAM)—but also a common newspaper, *Straight Track*.

ICAM originally began in 1980 when several union officers joined together to sponsor a lawsuit against Burlington Northern. The suits were thrown out of court, and the organization continued as a shell until 1984 when it was revived to deal with new issues.

ICAM gradually changed from a coalition of union officers to a membership organization. It began with \$1,500 in the kitty left over from the original lawsuits. It raised money through the sale of buttons and individual contributions. Now it is supported by contributions from local unions as well.

Cindy Burke is a clerk and president of Local Lodge 1310 of the Transportation Communications International Union. "In rail," Burke explains, "we

are divided into 14 or 15 craft-type unions. The main thing we wanted to do with ICAM was to get across the idea that the issues were common to all the unions, and that our strength was in unity.

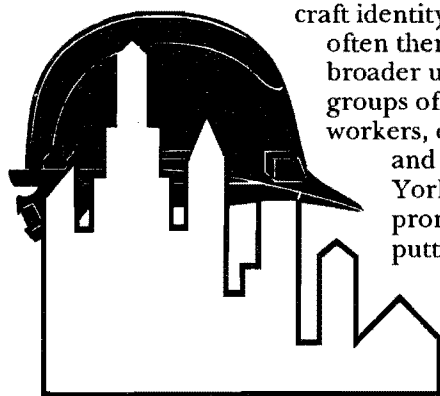
"The first issue of *Straight Track* was around 500 copies, and it was just locally distributed by hand at different workplaces, and left in offices where the crews meet. To give you an idea of how this has snowballed, the issue of *Straight Track* we put out in March 1989 was 15,000 copies. The paper went from a local mimeographed newsletter which was hand-delivered to something we had professionally printed in tabloid form, and which is mailed across the system to thousands of BN employees, as well as employees on a whole number of other railroads."

ICAM was able to beat back BN's attempt to impose a new "corporate culture" program (see Chapter 5).

A Building Trades Newspaper

Another industry with many unions at the same worksite is construction. On a typical construction site there may be workers from at least 10 different unions—which often don't work together very well. While building trades workers have a strong sense of

craft identity and union loyalty, often there is little sense of broader union solidarity. Two groups of construction workers, one in San Francisco and another in New York, are trying to promote solidarity by putting out newspapers which deal with all the trades. Dan Gilroy, a member of Carpenters Union Local 135



in Manhattan, says that his group got the idea from a group in San Francisco that publishes *The Hard Hat Times*. The New York paper is called *The Hard Hat News*.

While most of those who work on *The Hard Hat News* are carpenters, workers from several other trades participate as well. About five people do the writing and editing, and another ten help with distribution or in some other way. The paper publishes 5,000 copies about every three months.

"We distribute it on job sites, at union meetings, at bars," says Gilroy. "It gets a pretty positive reaction. There hasn't been anything like this, and there's a real lack of information that's accessible to the average worker about what's going on in this industry."

"Our paper is a lot more interesting than the typical union paper with pictures of your union officers shaking hands with people. People can tell it's a pro-union paper, but oriented toward reform of the unions. So the union officials don't like it. We make the point that people in these different trades should work together, and that eventually maybe we should

have one union of construction workers and not fifteen. Though I don't think that's coming anytime right over the hill."

In the future, says Gilroy, *The Hard Hat News* may conduct surveys of the members' views, help draw up suggested contract demands, and support reformers running for office in different locals.

Forming a Local Labor Coalition

In Tompkins and Cortland Counties of New York, a labor coalition has been organized which helps unions with contract campaigns, strikes and lockouts. In the course of these activities the coalition has helped to revitalize the local labor movement.

The coordinator for the Tompkins-Cortland Labor Coalition is Coert Bonthius, a member of Carpenters Local 603. "This area had not had a central labor body since the late 1940s," Bonthius explains. "The Coalition began out of an alliance that already existed among the unions on the campus of Cornell University."

"In this area Cornell and higher education is the dominant industry. So the Cornell Alliance began reaching out to other unions and in 1985 formed the Tompkins-Cortland Labor Coalition when about 40 unions got together at a dinner held on Cornell's campus. It was the first time that all the unions in the two-county area had gotten together for years and years. After some fits and starts the coalition solidified itself by about 1986."

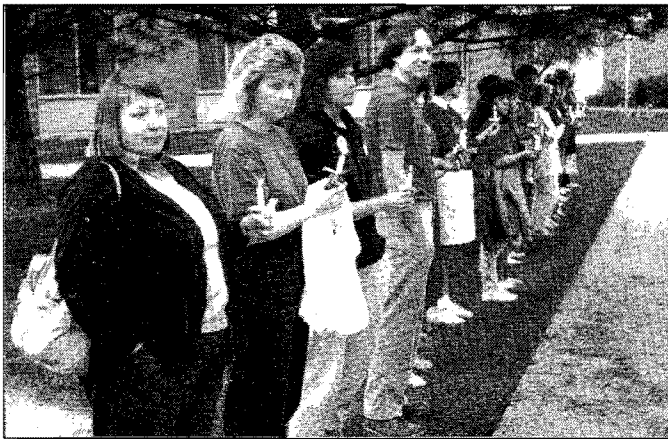
"In that year the coalition was strongest in Ithaca and tried to get the city to pass plant closing legislation. That was a two-year battle that ended up in 1988 with the city not only passing a law but also agreeing to fund the Labor Coalition for a part-time staff position. That was the beginning of our ability to reach out more effectively." Bonthius was hired as the part-time staff person and then succeeded in raising funds to support a full-time coordinator.

"In our area," Bonthius says, "the unions are not big unions, they don't have full-time staff people, and by and large they've been ignored by their regional or district unions. We talked about the need for unions to help each other out not only on strikes but also on day-to-day grievances and health and safety problems." The Coalition began to hold monthly meetings in Cortland.

In late 1988 the Labor Coalition was approached by officers of UAW Local 1326 at Pall Trinity Micro Corp. The Coalition supported the Pall Trinity workers in a number of ways, including reporting on their activities in the Coalition newspaper *The Working Press*, helping them publish their own newsletter, helping them organize a contract campaign and prepare for a strike, and finally supporting them when the company locked them out.

"The lockout lasted a week," Bonthius remembers. "During that time the coalition organized a rally right in front of the plant. Over 350 workers came to the rally. Not only 250 Pall Trinity workers, but about

100 workers from other plants. We had speakers from the United University Professors union, we had Civil Service Employees Association people there, we had Firefighters, we had people from Cornell UAW Local 2300, we had Ithaca-area unionists. It was a big shot in the arm. We got great press coverage. All the



Two hundred fifty union and community supporters held a candlelight vigil at the Ithaca, New York school board meeting to demand a fair contract for paraprofessionals. They won a 25% pay increase after a community-union coalition was formed and numerous rallies held.

editorials in the paper were coming out against Pall Trinity and in support of the workers."

At the end of the lockout, the Pall Trinity Workers returned to work with their first decent contract in a decade. Their success led other local unions to seek the Coalition's support, and led in turn to other victories.

Informal Cross-Union Groups

Interunion solidarity need not be organized through official union organizations. In Youngstown, Ohio a group of rank and file union members and supporters have created the "free-flowing" Workers Solidarity Club to help workers win strikes, organize unions, and democratize unions. One of the group's founders, attorney Staughton Lynd, refers to it as "a parallel Central Labor Union." You can read about the Club in the Stewards Corner at the end of this chapter.

Another "parallel central labor body" was created in the Boston area in 1982 and until 1988 engaged in a wide variety of solidarity activities.

"We got started after the Greyhound strike of 1982," remembers Rand Wilson, a Boston-area activist. A Greyhound support committee had formed, made up of activists from various unions. "After that experience we said to ourselves, Hey, there's going to be plenty more of these fights, and we don't need to re-organize each time there is one to get everybody together all over again. We ought to try to maintain what we've built—and that was the nucleus for the Labor Support Project.

"It evolved from the initial conception of being

contract campaign and strike support specialists and having committees that would help out in these emergency situations, to being a monthly forum where people gathered and shared information and made announcements. It became a forum for what's going on and for people to get help and get to know one another.

"Probably our most important function was being a DIAL-A-CROWD. We set up a phone tree and we were able to turn out troops on short notice without a lot of bureaucracy or without a lot of 'proper channels.'"

In the Project's early stages the local AFL-CIO opposed it and notified member unions that they should offer strike support only through official channels.

The Labor Support Project took on a number of different struggles. They helped a United Electrical Workers (UE) local fight a plant closing in Athol, Massachusetts. They supported a group of workers on strike at the Hillhaven nursing home.

"That was the other thing that was unique about the Labor Support Project," says Wilson. "We got involved in big struggles, but more importantly, we got involved in a lot of teeny-weeny struggles. Twenty-five workers at the Nickelodeon movie chain were organized, again by the UE, and they asked for our help. We leafleted the people coming to the theater, and we picketed it, and we mobilized to make a difference in something that was very, very small and local, but very important to the union and the workers involved in it.

"The nursing home fight, the movie theater, were just a handful of people, but we jumped into it, walked the picket lines and brought mobs of people.

"We also did some work around recognition and union representation. When workers at Casa Myrna Vazquez, a battered women's shelter, a non-profit agency, were organizing, we set up a meeting with management and intervened on behalf of the staff. We tried to organize people in the minority community and women's community to see that the organization of a union there was not a negative thing.

"So we got involved in a lot of first contracts after people had won an election. We worked against a decent campaign and brought people to rallies for that one."

In 1985 the Project sponsored a demonstration on May Day against apartheid. Over 350 union members from 30 unions participated and six members sat in overnight at the offices of a company that sold Krugerrands.

How It Worked

While it was not an official group, the Labor Support Project did have a structure. Twenty local unions were endorsers, and the Project always had somebody working at least 10 hours a week to keep the group organized. "We had monthly meetings," says Wilson. "We had a steering committee of four people that would meet and make decisions about whether to do a mailing for somebody and whether or not to activate

the phone chain.

"We did mailings, and occasionally those mailings would have a cover note. There was never an official newsletter. Just notice of meetings, what's going on, when the next picket line was. We had picnics, there were fundraising parties, and there were contests. We did all kinds of things to keep things going and keep morale high.

"Our list of labor activists in the Boston area became a very useful tool to let people know what was going on. The AFL-CIO had a list of unions, but they didn't have a list of activists. If you needed to get a crowd together you came to the Labor Support Project because these folks were the action faction. You could send letters to the official 100 people or so on the AFL-CIO list, but the letters would die on the desk because it would be considered illegitimate activity."

Action Faction

While it became known as the "action faction" of the Boston area, the Labor Support Project also hosted speakers and debates, Wilson remembers. "We would often host people like Jane Slaughter, Stanley Aronowitz, a Filipino labor leader, Roberto Ortiliz, Ray Rogers, Jerry Tucker." In May 1988 the Project held a dinner attended by 120 people to honor local union stewards and to bring together stewards who had been involved in important local struggles. The Project also sponsored cultural events such as "Great Moments in Boston's Labor History," a cabaret-style evening including "stories about great moments from those who were there," music and theater.

To get an idea of the variety of activities the Project participated in, see the box.

But the Labor Support Project eventually folded. Wilson says this was largely because many of its activities had been taken up by the AFL-CIO.

"When we started in 1983," says Wilson, "the concept of turning out rank and file union members for other unions in struggle, either in a contract or a recognition election or in a strike was a radical idea, at least in this area. Not just the fact that we were doing it autonomously, but just the act of doing it.

"But we proved that it could make a difference and that union members given the opportunity would turn out and did care, that all you had to do was ask. So then that work began to be taken up by the mainstream, and began to be seen as a very legitimate activity.

"I remember one time having the AFL-CIO say, when confronted about the lack of support for struggle in Massachusetts, 'Our business is legislation and lobbying, that's just not what we do.' Now they have a guy full-time, in fact they regularly assign a staff member to any strike that's going on."

The turning point, says SEIU staffer Enid Eckstein, who also worked on the Project, was a rally for the International Paper strikers which was co-sponsored by the Labor Support Project and the AFL-CIO. "We felt, better that the AFL do it and that we get to play a role in it. And by that time some of the people

who had been active in the Support Project either had gotten elected to office or had fairly significant staff positions, so that they could get their local union to do the strike support in the name of their unions, as opposed to using the Labor Support Project."

There was also a problem, says Eckstein, because the Labor Support Project never figured out just what its role was. There were at least three different groups with three different ideas. First, a group that wanted to contend for power within the State Fed. Second, a group that just wanted to do strike support. And third, a group that wanted to create an alternate labor cen-

Support Project Had A Finger in Every Pie

Following are excerpts from a July 1987 mailing of the Massachusetts Labor Support Project. You will see references to several struggles and organizations profiled elsewhere in this book.

CHANT OF THE MONTH...here is a catchy picket line chant from the recent District 1199 strike at the Resthaven Nursing Home in Roxbury:

SAVOY* YOU LIAR
WE'LL SET YOUR ASS ON FIRE!
(*Substitute your own least favorite boss)

GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING

Monday July 13, 1987

Agenda:

7:00-7:30 snacks and socializing

7:30-9:30 reports and discussion

"Can't Take No More, The Story of a Strike To Win a Union." The Labor Support Project premieres their video about the American Finish and Chemical workers in Chelsea who recently won union recognition with the Laundry and Dry Cleaning Int'l Union, Local 66.

Report Back:

- Chelsea Organizing Drive
- Local 26 update, post-Marathon
- Jerry Tucker (UAW) educational
- Resthaven Nursing Home strike and victory with Dist. 1199
- Conference on the new Immigration Law
- On The Line, women's labor chorus

Discussion:

- New Immigration Law, where do we go from here
- Labor Support Project strategies; what has been successful and what else can we be doing

Elections: Steering Committee

NEWS: The Labor Immigration Committee, originally initiated with the help of the Labor Support Project, recently was awarded a grant...of \$35,000 to create a resource center...

1987 Membership Dues of \$5.00 helps cover the cost of the mailings you receive throughout the year. Please send it today!

Come to the Sun. Aug. 23 PICNIC LINE.
1st Annual Labor Support Project barbecue...

ter.

"We were never able to engage the AFL-CIO in a debate," remembers Wilson. "I remember wanting to do that. The main tension in the group was between people like myself that were looking for a debate with the AFL-CIO and the other people that were trying to avoid that fight. They wanted to do the solidarity work, but they didn't want to directly engage in a battle. Weren't we together to do labor support, they said, not to do ideological battle with more conservative forces in the labor movement? That was always the tension."

Networks Within a Company or Industry

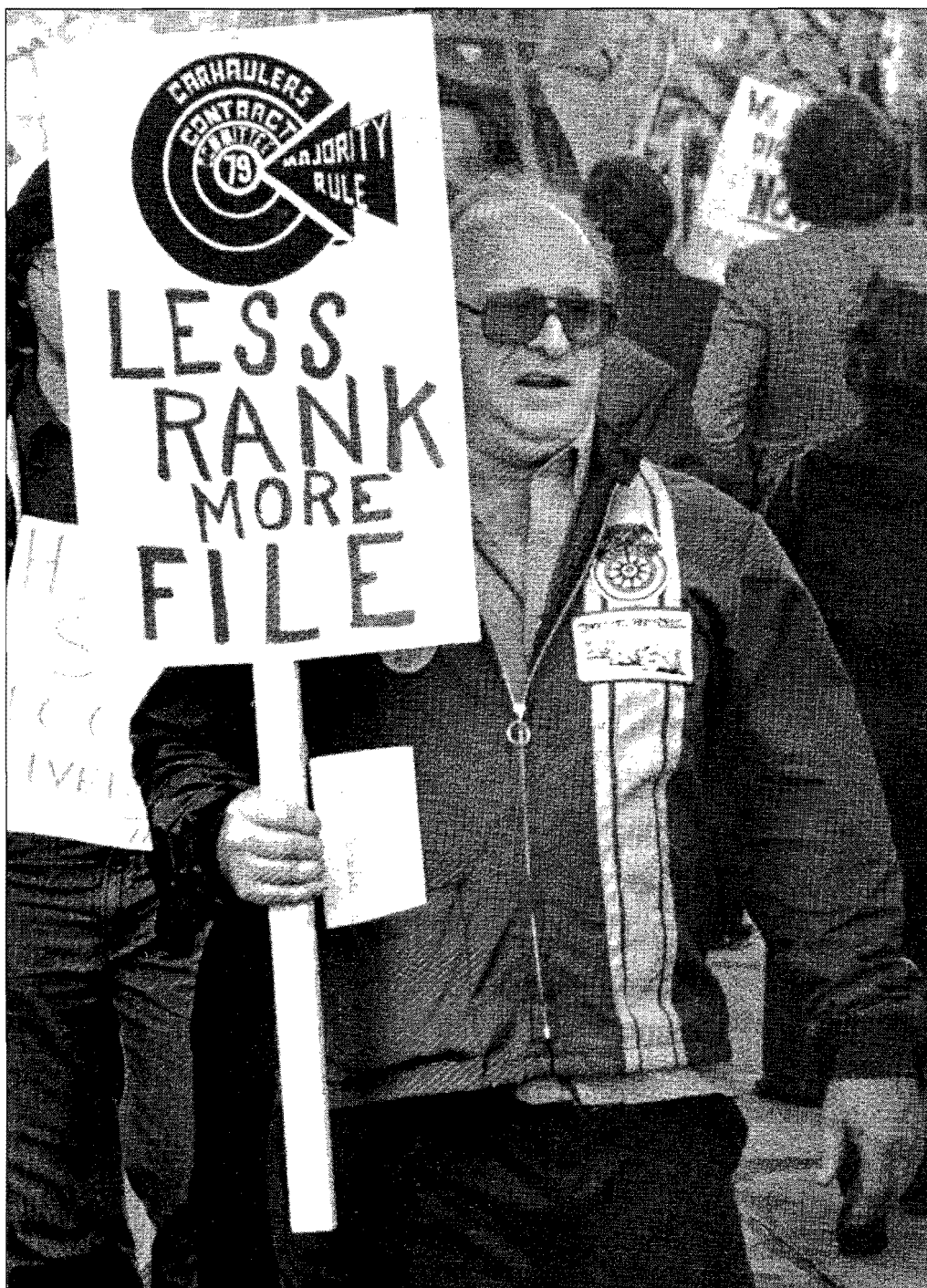
Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), the national reform movement within the Teamsters union, has provided the structure through which rank and file workers from particular companies or industries can meet. TDU has formed networks of car-haulers, of warehouse workers at Kroger, of freight drivers, and for the 140,000 Teamsters at United Parcel Service (UPS). Although forming such networks is obviously much easier when you have a national office with a staff to assist, some of TDU's methods should be usable in other industries as well.

TDU generally holds at least one yearly international (U.S. and Canada) meeting of workers from a particular company or industry at its Rank and File Convention. Such a meeting is especially important if it falls within a year of a coming contract. These craft or company meetings may also be held regionally, East Coast UPS workers, for example. At such a meeting workers discuss the state of the industry and the union there. If a contract expiration is approaching, they formulate contract proposals.

The group—the Car-haulers Coordinating Committee, for example—draws up its proposals in the form of petitions to be circulated in the locals or as motions to be presented at union meetings. Network activists then mobilize members to attend the union meetings, distribute flyers, and raise motions from the floor. Usually new contracts can be made at such meetings, widening the network.

The network will then publish a special contract bulletin with up-to-date information on the negotiations and TDU's opinion about various proposals.

Once the negotiators come back with a settlement, the network recommends to the membership either to accept it, vote it down, or vote to strike, as the case may be. At times the networks or their leaders have brought suit to protect the members' right to



The Car-haulers Coordinating Committee picketed national carhaul contract negotiations in 1979.

Jim West

an informed decision or their right to vote.

These networks of Kroger workers, freight drivers, UPS workers or car haulers have given the rank and file the opportunity to meet together and develop their own strategy. Some, like the car haulers, have been in existence now for over ten years, which means that they do not have to be rebuilt from scratch every three years when a new contract comes up. It also means that workers can be in touch about other issues besides the contract.

As mentioned before, these workers have the advantage of the help of TDU. It would be possible, however, for workers in other industries to take steps toward such regional or national networks by making rank and file contacts, which is discussed in the next section.

Making Rank and File Contacts

Whatever formal structure your union has for communication among workers at your company or in your industry, rank and file workers should maintain their own communications. It can't hurt if in addition to your local president talking to the local president at the other plant, you also call and talk to a few rank and file workers at the other plant yourself, and carry that information back to a lunchroom meeting.

How do you make and maintain such rank and file contacts? In the appendix on Research we discuss ways to find other facilities of your company. Some of the following suggestions and examples may seem obvious—but it's often the obvious which is overlooked.

- Some workers are in daily contact through the course of their work with other plants or offices in their system. There's no reason why you can't use these phone, mail or even company mail contacts to make union contacts too (discreetly).

- If the company for which you work has another plant in the same city, you may simply drive over there before or after work and talk to other workers who are coming and going. This is what many professional union organizers do. At some companies it is possible to simply walk into the building and go to the cafeteria and sit down and talk.

- You can also go to a nearby restaurant, coffee shop or bar for lunch or right after work. Be bold—if you see the company jacket or cap or a group of likely people, walk over and introduce yourself. This is easiest, of course, if you've got a particular issue you know your two workplaces need to work together on, such as an upcoming contract.

- If there are company drivers who go back and forth between offices or plants making deliveries, ask one to send a message for you. This can be done with plants in the same city or in different cities. Ask the driver to deliver it to the union steward.

- For years rank and file Teamsters have reached out to other Teamsters simply by putting leaflets under the windshield wipers of trucks at truck-stops. "Teamsters. Do you want a decent contract? A local meeting will be held ... Call 555-9999 for information."

ation."

- It may be possible to simply walk into a workplace, go to the bulletin board, and put up a leaflet. "Rank and File union meeting, July 2, Saturday, VFW hall, 1 P.M. Call 555-9999 for information." Sometimes it may be necessary to stand at the plant gate and hand out a leaflet.

- If you know where the company has other facilities, you can call the AFL-CIO Central Labor Council in that city and ask whether that plant is organized and by what union.

- Don't forget the phone book. Local unions are usually listed under "Labor" in the Yellow Pages.

- Some plants post a seniority list near the time clock. If you can get a copy of that list you can make phone calls.

- Some rank and file groups have an answering machine which both gives information and takes messages. "Sisters and brothers, this is the Rank and File Democracy Committee. We will be having a meeting this Saturday, July 2 at 1 P.M. at the VFW hall at 2299 South Street. We are discussing the company's proposal on the health plan and the coming contract. Workers from all three plants are invited. If you have any questions please leave your name, phone number and the message after the tone. Remember—we will not give up our health plan."

- You can transmit leaflets and newspaper clippings by fax. Some quick-print stores maintain fax machines.

- Some local union activists now keep in contact by computer network—even with workers in other countries. Belonging to a network allows you to send a letter or document to the network's central computer at any time of the day or night. You can address the communication to any other member of the network, or to many members. Those members can then download your letter at their convenience.

For these purposes, one of the best networks is Peacenet, based in San Francisco. It is relatively cheap and a fair number of labor activists already are members. Peacenet is working to promote more use of the system by labor activists. For information on how to join, see Appendix E.

★ ★ ★

The basic building block of the labor movement is the local union at the workplace, but if we are to make those unions more powerful, we need to make the connections that give us greater economic and political power. That process begins today with a phone call to a sister or a brother down the way.

Action Questions

1. Are the workers in your *industry* all organized by one union? Or is there a variety of unions involved? If the latter, what are the unions? What are the relations between these unions like?

2. Are the workers in your *company* all organized by one union? Or by a variety of unions? If the latter, what are the unions involved? How are relations be-

tween the unions? Do you have copies of their contracts? Do you know their expiration dates? Does management try to play you off against each other?

3. Is there a "trade division" or "pool" or "coordinated bargaining council" or some other structure which brings together local union officers from your company who work in different plants and cities, in the same union or in different unions? If so, how does it function? If not, would it be a good idea to organize one? Could your local union take the initiative? Or should some other local?

4. What about relations with other workplaces in your neighborhood, whatever the industry? Have you

talked to other plants and unions in the area and met with them, worker to worker? Are there any common problems or issues?

5. What about the local central labor body (Federation of Labor or Central Labor Council)? Does your local send delegates? What happens there? Is it possible to work through the central labor body to establish contact between locals?

6. What about setting up an informal group of union activists or leaders who get together to discuss problems, support strikes, and the like? Who would you call first?



Steward's Corner — April 1989

The Workers' Solidarity Club of Youngstown, Ohio

by Staughton Lynd, with the assistance of other members of the Club

We wanted a place where rank and file workers could go to get strike support without a lot of hassle and delay. We were disillusioned with big national unions that encourage their members to "pay your dues and leave the rest to us." We were called "rebels" and "dissidents" but we believed in solidarity, and we wanted a way to see each other regularly, share experiences, laugh at each other's jokes, and dream up plans to change the world.

The Workers' Solidarity Club grew out of classes at the hall of Utility Workers Local 118. Local 118 had been through a long strike a couple of years earlier. There was a core of members who were eager to give tangible strike support to other workers. In the fall of 1981, we held a series of discussions on the topic, What has gone wrong with the labor movement? As the discussions drew to a close, we realized we didn't want to disband. We gave ourselves a name and started to meet monthly.

From the beginning, the Club has been extremely informal. There are no officers except a treasurer. Two members get out a monthly notice describing what is expected to happen at the next meeting. Individuals volunteer to chair particular meetings. There are no dues, but by passing the hat we have raised hundreds of dollars for legal defense, publications, and travel expenses. Beer at the end of every meeting, and annual picnics and Christmas parties, keep us cheerful.

Lots of Unions

The Workers' Solidarity Club is like a Wobbly "mixed local," in that its members come from many different trades and unions, from bakery workers to steelworkers to teachers. A recent leaflet was signed by 25 people. Of these, 17 are current employees; six are stewards or local union officers. The remaining signers are retired or unemployed.

Our first big action came in the summer of 1982. Workers at Trumbull Memorial Hospital in Warren,

Ohio, members of AFSCME, went on strike. Two members of the Club visited the picket line. The Club put out a series of leaflets appealing to strikebreakers not to cross. The leaflets also invited members of other unions to rally every Wednesday afternoon in front of the hospital. The rallies grew larger and larger. People brought homemade banners and signs, and chanted slogans like: "Warren is a union town, we won't let you tear it down."

As a result of all this mass activity the AFSCME local survived the strike. After the strike, the Club conducted classes for 60-80 members of the AFSCME local.

Other Club activities have included weekly picketing at the Bessemer Cement Company, which closed and reopened non-union under a different owner, and strike support for the Food and Commercial Workers.

Although there are three lawyers in the Club, we all agree that legal activity should reinforce mass activity, not the other way around. A local bakery became notorious for its many discharges. Club members were involved in picketing, NLRB charges, and a lawsuit, and the number of discharges has decreased dramatically.

Do Our Own Organizing

In evaluating the Trumbull strike, many Club members felt that our role had been essentially reactive. Union leaders made decisions about strategy; rank and file union members and strike supporters had to live with these decisions whether or not they agreed with them. Some felt that the Club should seek ways to do its own organizing.

This has been a long process, and we are still learning. Club members have been involved in three attempts to organize unions. One was successful. A small group of visiting nurses and home health aides formed an independent union for which they (not we!) chose the name Visiting Nurses Solidarity.

The most dramatically successful organizing in

which Club members have taken part involves retirees from LTV Steel and other steel companies, and chemically-disabled workers from the Lordstown GM plant. Youngstown-area LTV retirees, organized as Solidarity USA, have reached out to other LTV retirees in Canton, Ohio and Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, and put pressure on USWA decision makers. The first 1989 meeting of Solidarity USA attracted an estimated 400 persons.

At GM, former workers and the relatives of deceased workers have joined forces with current employees to found Workers Against Toxic Chemical Hazards. WATCH has been sought out by employees of other companies who are exposed to similar hazards. Some of the leaders of both Solidarity USA and WATCH have become new and valued participants in the Club.

Our Contribution

What is the purpose of the Workers' Solidarity Club? What is its long-range contribution to rebuilding the labor movement?

There may be as many answers to these questions as there are members of the Club. At a recent meeting, one member characterized the Club as the local labor movement's SWAT team. One of the founders remarked: "We don't fit in. We shouldn't. We're free-flowing." Another longtime participant commented on the hundreds of persons who have passed through meetings of the Club during its seven-year history. What we've shown, he added, is that you have to get people involved; you can't just throw money at problems, but must build a mass movement in your own backyard.

There are a couple of things we would like to share with others who might want to try something

similar.

First, we have discouraged lecturing, and rarely make long written presentations. We think that a broader consciousness has grown naturally from the experience of talking and acting together. Having lived through the way big corporations trampled on people's lives in Youngstown, we find it easy to relate to corporations doing the same thing to Indians in the Southwest, or to Nicaragua. Last spring four members of the Club went to Nicaragua and worked there for two weeks.

Second, we don't feel the need to come to a group decision about the correctness of a proposed action before a member does something. Instead the member will say: "I'm planning to do so-and-so. I need help. Anyone who wants to give me a hand, meet me" at such-and-such a time and place. Acting in this way gives us a chance to try things out in practice. It's like the experimental method in science. We're able to draw conclusions from what works and what doesn't.

Personally, I think that the Workers' Solidarity Club of Youngstown is doing what the line in "Solidarity Forever" talks about: in its small way, it is bringing to birth a new world from the ashes of the old.

All around us is a capitalist society that believes in dog eat dog. We in the labor movement know that at its best our movement practices a higher ethic, the ethic that an injury to one is an injury to all. The thing is, though, we have to *live* that ethic, not just talk about it. In the words of a woman from GM: "It's workers helping workers."

[Staughton Lynd is an attorney in Youngstown. Red suspenders in all sizes, with the words WORKERS SOLIDARITY stenciled in black, can be ordered for \$8 a pair from Greg Yarwick, 843 Brookfield, Youngstown, Ohio 44512. Make checks to Workers Solidarity Club of Youngstown.]



Steward's Corner — December 1989

How Southern Indiana Unions Created a Labor Library

by Greg Young, President, UMWA Local 1907

One of the most frustrating aspects of walking into a public library in our area is the almost complete absence of material about organized labor. Adding to this frustration is the lack of labor history in the public school system.

To help fill this void, several local unions in southern Indiana have joined together to establish a library dedicated to making labor-related materials available to the public.

The idea of creating the library began after two members of the United Mine Workers, Brad Burton and Gary Fritz, toured the new Boonville-Warrick County Library in Boonville, Indiana and found only two books about organized labor. They began discussing the idea with their own local unions and other locals in the area.

The response was slow at first but soon began to

build momentum.

Next, the library board had to be approached to see if they would be willing to set aside shelf space dedicated solely to labor. Since it was a new library, the space was no problem, and since organized labor has a very large presence in the area, the board accepted the entire plan.

After the space was secured, the committee sent letters to all local unions in the area asking for their support. Each local which contributed \$100 or more would be entitled to a representative on the committee.

Most locals responded in some way. Some sent the minimum \$100, while others donated as much as \$1,000. A few donated books about their union, and many individuals have contributed books from personal collections or on favorite topics.

Grand Opening

After the labor library had books to offer, the next step was to bring it to the attention of the public. On April 1, 1987, the library held a grand opening that was well attended and received coverage from local newspapers and from the *United Mine Workers Journal*.

Since then, we've tried to schedule activities every three or four months to keep interest in the library and to generate funds to continue purchasing materials.

Our first event was timed with the UMWA contract expiration. We worked with a local theater owner to bring the movie *Matewan* to the area. The house was packed for three weeks.

When some locals started having trouble with quality circles or the team concept, we scheduled a lec-

ture by one of the authors of *Choosing Sides*. We try to pick a topic that is current.

We've helped in fundraising with the Boy Scouts in a scholarship program for sending underprivileged kids to summer camp, and we plan to get involved in a merit badge they offer on American Labor.

Over the last two-and-a-half years we've assembled nearly 100 books covering a wide spectrum of topics: labor history, biographies, labor law, union leadership, art, and historical novels. We also have about 20 video tapes available and are in the process of establishing an archives section.

Building the library was just like any other committee project. All it takes is people who are willing to work to make it happen.

[To contact the library, write: Labor Library Committee, P.O. Box 209, Boonville, IN 47601.]

Reaching Out 7. to the Community

When industry first grew up in the United States and Canada, the community grew up around it. A businessman built a factory on a river, and houses were built around the factory: for the businessman himself (his was the house on the hill) and for the workers. Until the middle of the twentieth century, workers tended to live near the factories where they worked. When workers organized unions, the organization of the union was simultaneously and almost automatically the organization of the working class community. The big organizing drives and strike waves of the 1890s, 1918, 1934-38, and 1946 were really upheavals of entire working class communities, and in some cases virtual uprisings against the businessmen who had exploited them and the local governments that had sided with the businessmen.

Today the situation is more complicated. Since the 1950s and the growth of freeways and suburbs, a worker may live in one town and work in another. There are still working class communities, of course, but they are often miles from the workplace, and the workplace may be in an industrial district far from any residential community, or in a suburb most of whose residents are managers and other upper middle class types.

The question then arises, What is "the community"? Is it those who live in the neighborhood of a workplace? Is it the neighbors of the workers? Or must it be a more amorphous grouping—"the public"? How does a union target such a constituency? Today community support cannot be counted on, it must be organized.

In this chapter we will examine unions' efforts to garner community support on issues which directly affect both workers and community—natural alliances, if you will. To read about more about organizing community support, including support for issues which mainly concern the workers themselves, see Chapters 8, 9, 13, 14, 17, and 20.

Boston Hospital Workers' Ongoing Coalition with the Community

The three unions at Boston City Hospital (SEIU 285, AFSCME 1489 and the House Officers Association) participate in the BCH Community Coalition, which attempts to defend BCH as the hospital of Boston's poorer communities. The three unions see their alliance with the community as so important that they pay a part-time staff person to do community organizing. They have built a coalition that includes the community where the hospital is located, the patients who use the hospital, and other groups concerned about health care.

"We serve a large percentage of the poor neighborhoods in Boston, a high percentage of people of color and immigrants," says Marcia Hams, the administrator for the House Officers Association. "We've worked with community groups against 'patient dumping,' or economic transfers, patients turned away from other hospitals. We were very supportive of the Massachusetts universal health care bill; we're probably the only group of doctors in the entire state that supported it."

There have been discussions about rebuilding BCH, and the community coalition wants to make sure that a new hospital isn't a smaller hospital. "There is a strong effort to downsize it by about 15 or 20 percent," says Hams, "so we've been working with community groups on whether there will actually be enough beds by the time it's built."

"For example, the Mayor underfunded the budget, so we've been fighting for a supplemental budget. To dramatize that we had a funeral for BCH on the City Hall Plaza. That involved the leadership of the homeless movement in the city, people from elderly housing projects in the area near the hospital, people that use the hospital consistently. We did organizing in some of the churches in the Black com-

munity; the AIDS Action Committee participated, and ACT-UP, another AIDS organizing group."

Meizhu Lui, president of AFSCME Local 1489, explains how the unions have developed good relations with community groups.

"One thing is being specific. 'The community' can be enormous. You have to figure out what little piece of the community will be concerned about what you're working on at the moment.

"For example, about a year ago they were trying to close one of the GYN floors, and we were afraid that they were going to get rid of some abortion ser-



Steve Mazur

Boston City Hospital workers demonstrate at City Hall Plaza.

vices to poor women. So we called women's organizations that we knew and asked them to attend a meeting. Then they were the ones who called for a meeting with the commissioner, so that the initiative didn't come from us but from women's groups and women's health organizations.

"Often, I think, unions are seen as reaching out to the community when they need something, but not reciprocating when the community wants something. A classical example is the relationship between organized labor and the civil rights movement. Often the unions are not there when the other side needs something, but they expect civil rights groups to march with them on Solidarity Day. When we work with a local group, we want to have an on-going relationship, so that we can help them and they can help us, so that it doesn't feel like a one-way street.

"So, for example, we're getting support from a Haitian community organization, just because a lot of Haitians use the hospital. But at the same time we tried to talk with them about issues they have about the hospital, issues that we might have been missing. This led to several meetings between the Haitian organizer of the community group and workers inside the hospital, and encouraging them to form a Haitian workers caucus.

"The caucus is loose, but the Haitian workers have met a number of times and they feel more tied in now. They feel like the union is interested in them and is going to take up the things they are interested in—being used as translators, for example.

"Also, we try to know what's going on in the com-

munity and to be there. For example, violence is a big issue. You've probably read about these gangs and all the stabbings, shootings, killings. You can have the members of two rival gangs coming to visit their friends in the hospital at the same time.

"We have several of our members whose kids have already gotten shot or hurt, so we've been trying to think of a way to help in the community. Some of the union members who are Viet Nam vets decided to go into the community and talk to the kids and the gangs, because they feel that their experiences with violence are very similar to what the kids are going through. And that has been promoted by the unions."

Vancouver Postal Workers Prevent Shutdowns

The Conservative Party government of Canada is pushing to contract out postal services. Canada Post has already set up full-service post offices in 7-11 stores and drugstore chains, many of them near existing post offices. The Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) fears this could lead to the complete privatization of the industry.

The Vancouver CUPW local has carried out campaigns to save two postal stations and the jobs of about a dozen wicket clerks (window clerks). Marion Pollack, who has held offices from shop steward to president of the local, tells about their alliance with postal customers.

"Station A is located in the downtown core of Vancouver, an expanding area. We kept getting wind that Station A was going to close; it was one of our bigger stations with six or seven people. We knew that if we lost Station A there would be a ripple effect."

The Vancouver local called a meeting with the clerks from Station A and came up with a plan to mobilize community support. "One of the things about Station A which is a bit unique," Pollack remembers, "is that it had a lot of boxes—businesses, religious organizations, a lot of senior citizens and loggers who would come into town irregularly to get their mail. So we put out a flier to all the boxholders in Station A. Also the wicket clerks handed these letters across the counter, surreptitiously.

"On the bottom they had a tear-off that said 'Please save Station A,' addressed to Pat Carney, the Member of Parliament for the area. She was also a very powerful cabinet minister. At one point she said that she had received over 400 clip-offs to save Station A." Many of the businesses served by Station A also complained to Carney.

The union met with Carney's aides and made a presentation to City Council. The Council voted to recommend that Canada Post save Station A.

The union got media attention by organizing a public protest. "We held a mock funeral at Station A," says Pollack. "We had a coffin, and pallbearers who were wearing tuxedos and dark glasses. We marched through the downtown talking about the death of the

Post Office." When the B.C. Federation of Labor held its convention in Vancouver, CUPW got the Federation to hold a demonstration of its 2,000 delegates at Station A.

As a result of these activities Station A was saved and the union turned to the fight to save Station B and the jobs of the three wicket clerks who worked there.

Saving Station B

"Station B is in the Downtown Eastside," says Pollock, "what you would call Skid Row, which intersects with Chinatown. Station B does a lot of transactions. There are a lot of money orders, because a lot of the people in the Downtown Eastside don't have bank accounts. They also send a lot of parcels overseas. It's a three-person station, but it's a busy station.

"In the Downtown Eastside there are a lot of very active community groups, so we sent out letters to all of those, as well as to the Chinese organizations, the ethnic organizations in the neighborhood. We must have sent out 50 or 60 letters. As a result of those we got a lot of support.

"We got support from the Carnegie Center, which is the community center and known as the 'Living Room of the Downtown Eastside.' When they had a forum on Downtown Eastside concerns, we spoke there. The social service workers had a meeting and we spoke there too. We sent out letters to the churches in the neighborhood and got them to write letters.

"But mostly we worked with this group called DERA, the Downtown Eastside Residents Association. DERA is without a doubt the major force in the Downtown Eastside, and it's very multi-racial. They have a Chinese activity program, their meetings are translated into Chinese. They do advocacy, they do political work, they do housing. We spoke at a lot of DERA meetings and we wrote articles for the DERA newsletter.

"We were arranging to have a demonstration outside Station B after one of DERA's meetings. DERA can mobilize 300 or 400 people, a lot of them elderly Chinese, so it would have been a real embarrassment to the Post Office." Just before the demonstration was to take place Canada Post announced that Station B would not be closed.

Los Angeles Teachers Reach Out to Parents

In May 1989 the United Teachers-Los Angeles (UTLA) struck for nine days and won raises of 8%-8%-8% over three years, making the Los Angeles teachers the highest-paid urban school teachers in the nation. The UTLA also won "Shared Decision Making" (SDM) councils, made up half of teachers and half of parents, community representatives, non-certificated school employees, and administrators (and in secondary schools students as well). These councils have decision-

making powers in certain areas which were previously in the hands of the principal, giving teachers an increased voice in determining their own working conditions. One of the factors that went into winning the SDM councils was the beginnings of an alliance between teachers and the community.

UTLA is a joint AFT-NEA local union with about 22,000 members. Several thousand other school district employees are members of SEIU Local 99. Altogether the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) employs 32,000 teachers who teach 700,000 students at some 700 schools.

The UTLA under President Wayne Johnson had won a big wage increase in its previous contract. But the union's bread-and-butter approach had left it out of touch with the concerns of parents and the community. During the 1980s the problems in the Los Angeles schools reached crisis proportions as the drop-out rate hit 39 percent. Parents and the public were increasingly concerned about the quality of education. Rising immigration from Central America and Asia meant a huge increase in the number of foreign-born, non-English speaking residents in Los Angeles. The District estimated that over 56 percent of its students came from families which did not speak English in the home. In response a nativist backlash movement calling for "English Only" developed.

Within the UTLA, a group of teachers formed a group called LEAD which opposed bilingual education. They put forward a referendum on the issue within the UTLA. The group also called for an end to "waivers," a system which required teachers either to become bilingual by taking foreign language classes, or be transferred to another (usually less desirable) school. The union leadership did not take a position on the referendum and it passed, committing the union, at least nominally, to "English immersion" rather than bilingual education. This further alienated the UTLA from the large Latino community, which for the most part favored bilingual education.

The School District was well aware of the increasing isolation of the teachers union from the community as contract negotiations proceeded during 1988. Part of the District's strategy was to drive a wedge between the teachers and the community.

The union decided that it would be a mistake to strike, and instead opted for an "inside strategy." The teachers would continue teaching, but would refuse to perform tasks unrelated to teaching, such as turning in grades to the District (though the teachers would give grades to the students). However, LAUSD Superintendent Leonard Britton threatened to withhold paychecks if teachers withheld grades. He accused the UTLA of holding the children "hostage," a charge designed to separate teachers from parents and children. The union leadership was forced to give up the "inside strategy" and instead plan for a strike.

It was at this point that union leaders began to pay closer attention to building an alliance with the community. The first thing to be dealt with was the "English only" movement. The District, which had a commitment to bilingual education, had decided to

offer teachers a financial incentive to study a foreign language and become bilingual, worth as much as \$5,000 a year. The LEAD organization called for a second referendum, this one against the new financial incentives.

"This time," says Joel Jordan, a member of the UTLA's School/Community Relations Committee, "Johnson, the UTLA Board of Directors and the [union's] House of Representatives voted almost unanimously to oppose the referendum, primarily on the grounds that it would disrupt negotiations and further enflame the Latino community just before a possible strike. Leaders of the UTLA, including Johnson, met with Latino community activists to publicize the fact that the union leadership was opposed to LEAD's 'English only' position."

When the strike began 23,000 teachers, about 80 percent, stayed out, basically shutting the schools down. Participation in the strike was at least 75 percent for the duration, and student attendance fell off to about 50 percent. While the union had an official policy of encouraging students to stay in school, many teachers accepted and encouraged student participation in the strike. Students at several schools organized walkouts and joined teachers on the picket lines. The students at the predominantly Latino Belmont High joined their teachers on several occasions in marches to the school board offices. Many parents, particularly Latinos in the East and Central areas of Los Angeles, walked picket lines, attended demonstrations, called the School Board demanding a settlement, and kept their children home from school. News radio polls found overwhelming community sympathy for the teachers.

School/Community Relations Committee

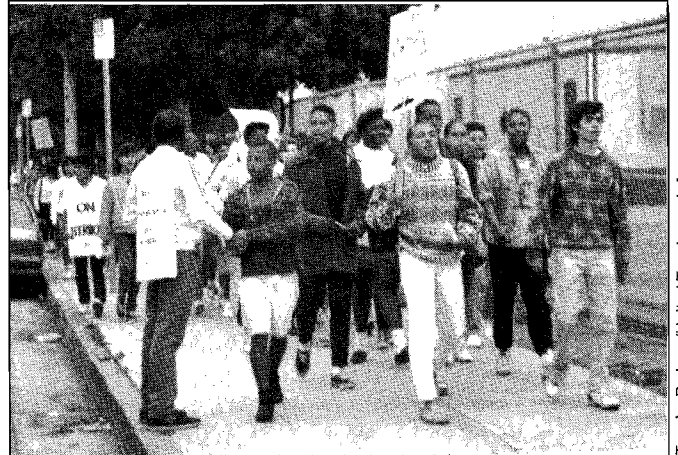
Meanwhile, the School/Community Relations Committee (S/CRC) had been working to foster greater cooperation between teachers and parents. In 1986 UTLA members Joel Jordan and Josh Pechthalt had organized the committee because they were concerned about the isolation of the union from the community. The committee had held a conference in 1987 called "Forging the Links," which included participants from SEIU Local 99 and from parents groups. In December 1988 they organized a breakfast with the theme "Building Alliances Between Parents and Teachers for Quality Education" which was attended by some 250 parents and union chapter chairs. Parent activists and UTLA leaders at many schools sat down together, often for the first time, to share their experiences and frustrations with school administrators. An ongoing coalition—the Parent-Teacher-Community Forum—emerged from the breakfast.

When the strike began, Johnson and the union leadership called upon the S/CRC to help the union win public support. "We got leaflets printed up and distributed throughout the city calling for a mass rally of parents, students, and community to support the strike," says Pechthalt, a high school social studies teacher. "We held a press conference in front of an

elementary school with Latino and Black parents, and called for a community-teacher rally in support of the strike."

The rally, which was organized in only two days, attracted 2,500 people at five p.m. on a workday, with speakers including parents, community activists, students, and representatives of other unions. "People who were at the rally really thought it was sensational," says Pechthalt.

"The situation in our schools is bad and getting worse. The changes that will be needed to turn it around are really dramatic. A teachers union by itself is not going to be able to do it. We need to have an alliance with parents and community people, and to



Students at Los Angeles High School marching in support of teachers.

help shape their vision of what the public schools should be like, so that these parents ultimately don't come down and bash teacher unions in their drive for improved schools. Many teachers see the need for on-site parental involvement in what goes on at the school. They see that when parents are active at the school site that their students do better."

Throughout the UTLA's year-long build-up to the contract, the union leadership had framed the issues with rhetoric aimed at the District bureaucracy. Johnson charged the District with hiding money in various accounts which should go to the classrooms. Before the strike, these arguments were used mainly to defend the UTLA's salary demands. But during the strike, as teachers saw the need to win community support, they began to see the school control issues as equally important. Teachers would be able to exercise genuine authority on the new Shared Decision Making councils, and even outvote the principal.

After the strike, teachers who had struck prepared slates for elections to the new councils at most schools. They won the overwhelming majority of the teacher seats. Teacher interest in working with parents and students had increased dramatically. At its first meeting after the strike, the School/Community Relations Committee attracted over sixty teachers to discuss using the councils to better communicate with parents.

The councils have limited power: the time al-

lotted for their meetings is only two one-hour meetings per month, and curriculum, hiring and other important decisions are still in the hands of the principals. But the School/Community Relations Committee is working with parents to put on another District-wide conference that will bring activists from the various councils together. The Committee wants to help build a grassroots, pro-union, pro-parent and pro-student movement which can pose an alternative school reform agenda to those of the various business roundtables and the Bush Administration.

COSH Group Works with Environmentalists

Since 1977 PHILAPOSH has been bringing local unions, community groups and environmentalists together to fight to protect both occupational health and the broader environment. PHILAPOSH is the Philadelphia Area Project on Occupational Safety and Health, representing 155 unions in the Delaware Valley in Delaware, Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

"Some of the fights we've been in, labor could not have won without the cooperation of the environmental movement—and I point to the 'Right to Know,'" says Jim Moran, the director of PHILAPOSH. The Right to Know law gives workers the right to know the names and chemical make-up of the materials they come in contact with.

"The first Right to Know law that gave rights to workers and community residents was passed in Philadelphia," Moran remembers, "and we did that by building the broadest possible coalition: women's groups, community groups, Vietnam vets, the whole shooting match was in it. They never saw such a formidable coalition come to the city council. We marched on City Hall and shut it down. The issue had broad appeal: what's poisoning us as workers inside is poisoning the people outside."

More recently PHILAPOSH has been working on a new issue: the "Right to Act." "In Jersey," Moran explains, "the aftermath of Right to Know is another coalition called Right to Know & Act. Now that we know the names of the poisons, what's our right to do something about it? It gives rights to workers internally to inspect and to shut down unsafe jobs, and rights to the community to come in the plant, to inspect what they're doing environmentally, how they're controlling leaks, spills and emissions. It's a whole new empowerment move, and also a unifying move for labor and the community and environmentalists to work together to clean it up."

The Coalition includes dozens of local unions, environmental groups such as the Coalition Against Toxics and many others.

To demonstrate the problem, the coalition began by asking a local refinery, the Coastal Eagle Point Oil Co., to allow a group of residents to conduct an inspection. Through reports made by Coastal to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as a result of the

Right to Know law, the coalition knew that Coastal had produced two million pounds of toxic chemical emissions in 1988. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection had fined Coastal \$761,000 for water pollution violations, and the National Wildlife Federation had named the plant in its "Toxic 500" report. When Coastal refused to allow residents to inspect the plant, the coalition organized a protest demonstration in December 1989 which received wide publicity in the local media.

During this same period, the Coalition pointed to an example where a company had allowed local residents to inspect its plant. The Coalition Against Toxics in the Marlton Lakes area of Philadelphia had arranged to inspect the Dynasil Corporation glass plant, taking along a technical advisor and then making recommendations to the company. The company agreed to most of the proposals. In this way the coalition demonstrated that its demands were workable.

In December 1989 the Coalition's demand for the Right to Act was turned into a bill called HELP—Hazard Elimination through Local Participation—and introduced in the legislature. HELP would create joint labor/management Hazard Prevention Committees with rights to investigate accidents and environmental releases, conduct regular inspections, and discuss hazard prevention with management. At the same time, by submitting a petition signed by 50 people, community groups would be certified to periodically inspect facilities in their neighborhoods with technical experts of their choice, and meet with management.

In arguing for the new legislation, the unions made the point that employees and citizens had common interests. "When workers are not safe, the community is often at risk as well," said Coalition Co-Chair Eric Scherzer of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union. "The danger of chemical plant emissions and explosions, for example, affects both workers and neighbors."

At a public hearing on the bill, the room was packed with over 250 people, most of them supporters. Thirty people testified for the bill, including victims of occupational illness and industrial hygienists who had accompanied citizen groups on plant inspections. The Coalition presented a study from the state Department of Health which estimated that there were up to 2,873 deaths each year in New Jersey from occupational illness.

On the national Workers Memorial Day held April 28, 1990, the coalition organized a memorial service and a forum on the HELP bill, an event attended by 250 people. As this book was going to press, the HELP bill was before the New Jersey state legislature.

Massachusetts Building Trades Save 'Prevailing Wage'

In Massachusetts in 1988 a coalition was built to defend the state's prevailing wage law. This law, similar to those in many other states, requires building

contractors on state-funded construction projects to pay the "prevailing wage," i.e., the local union wage scale. On the ballot was a referendum, "Question 2," which would have repealed the law.

"A number of states have repealed their prevailing wage laws in the last 10 years," explains Mark Erlich, program director for the Massachusetts Building Trades Council, which represents the more than 100 building trades local unions in the state. "Question 2 was put on the ballot by the Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC), which is an anti-union organization. The repeal was being proposed as a tax saver issue; everybody thought it was a sure winner. But the labor movement managed to redefine the issue to be about workers' rights versus corporate greed."

'Committee for Quality of Life'

The building trades and the state AFL-CIO formed a "Committee for Quality of Life." They got endorsements from unions or organizations of teachers, nurses, police, firefighters, consumers, senior citizens, tenants, women, and minorities.

We asked Erlich to explain how the building trades unions framed their arguments in defense of the prevailing wage.

"It was essentially a two-part argument," said Erlich. "First, we were responding to somebody else's message. That message was: 'This referendum will save you tax dollars. This prevailing wage law exists through a sweetheart deal between the building trades unions and the legislature, and the people who are paying for it are the common taxpayers. The artificially inflated wage rates are driving construction costs up.' They had some little right-wing think-tank put out a pseudo-study that said it would save the state \$212 million a year if it was repealed.

"So the first thing we had to do was simply say that that was wrong. We went to Data Resources, Inc., which is a very mainstream econometric consulting firm, and an arrangement was made with them. This was extremely important in terms of credibility—they were going to do a study on their own terms, and if it came out favorable to us, that was fine; if it came out unfavorable to us, we were stuck with it. It allowed us to counterpose that to the right-wing study, which we could easily dismiss because it was so bogus. The Data Resources study concluded that at best it would save taxpayers 0.6 percent, and it would end up having enormous costs in jobs and purchasing power throughout the local economy. So that was the first thing, to take the tax issue away from them.

"Then the question was, Why should people support us? In terms of other labor people, such as the lower paid service sector, we argued, 'They're coming after us now, you're next.' That was done essentially by pointing to who the ABC was, who their links were, that they were part of the Reagan right, and that while their immediate interest was in the construction industry, they had a bigger agenda in mind.

"In terms of the general population, we went out and argued that this was a community issue, that it was

directed at working people in general. We made the argument that decent wages help local economies. And we explained the trigger effect, meaning that for every dollar spent in construction wages, it triggered, say, five dollars in related things for other workers and for the community at large, such as the lumber suppliers, and the restaurants and the stores that the people spend their wages in.

"Then we argued: If it's not a tax issue, what is the real motive? We went on the attack and painted them as an employers' group that was basically looking to line their pockets. It got polarized into workers' rights versus corporate greed.

"I think the effectiveness of that pitch was demonstrated by the electoral results. Looking at the town-by-town results and breaking them down into lower and working class communities versus middle and upper class communities, the results were astonishing. About 90 percent supported us in the lower half and 80 percent opposed us in the upper half. It was about as clear a class-based election result as I've ever seen."

Complicated Campaign

Not all the endorsements came easily. "It was a very complicated campaign," says Erlich, "because the building trades were at the heart of it, and the building trades have an exclusionary history. In particular, women's groups and groups representing people of color didn't get on board at first. So when we went to organizations that historically had mixed feelings about the trades—women's groups, minorities, lower-paid workers—it was not, Let's pretend that everything is nicey-nice. It was, This is a coalition, this is an alliance. They're coming after us; they're ultimately coming after *all* of us.

"So it was a very interesting process of coalition building, negotiating with those groups and getting their endorsements. Quid pro quos were struck, and it was a very good thing for the building trades to be forced to do so." In exchange for support from Black and women's organizations against Question 2, the unions promised they would do more to help women and members of racial minorities get jobs in the trades.

"The real success of that campaign," says Erlich, "was that the building trades unions, which have traditionally been anywhere from undemocratic to just fairly passive, really mobilized their memberships and gave a new sense of pride in what it meant to be a union person. The reason the campaign won was because in the last two months you had literally thousands and thousands of building trades workers out in their communities leafleting and holding signs and talking to their neighbors and going to town meetings, and it became very much a community struggle. So when people talked about working people as a whole being affected, it was much more real because it was in everybody's community."

Since the campaign, however, the building trades have not made good on their promises. "It's complicated now," says Erlich, "by the fact that we've hit this

incredible bust and there's 30 or 40 percent unemployment, so some of the commitments that were made are going to be difficult to keep, because there's no work for anybody. This is a struggle in the building trades that I've been fighting two decades, and it's the best it's ever been. But the closer you get the more frustrated people get, because the expectations are a little higher.

"This was the first time that the building trades were forced to confront the issues of racism and sexism really head on. And some people for the first time were forced to confront mobilization of the membership and issues of democracy."

Erlach has written a book about the campaign; see *Labor At the Ballot Box* in Appendix E.

Zip Committees

The fight over "Question 2" was one of the things that led the Boston-area International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) to begin building "Zip Committees." The Zip Committee—the Zip is from zip code—is a group of volunteer union members working on community and political issues on a regular basis in their community, explains Philip Mason, Director of Training for the Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee of the Greater Boston Electrical Industry, formerly business agent for IBEW Local 103. Zip Committee members can be mobilized to go to community meetings or to do mailings, telephoning or door to door soliciting on issues of importance to the union.

"The IBEW initially recruited about 100 volunteers to work on the program," says Mason, "drawing heavily on the people who were involved in Question 2. We needed to get our initial volunteers involved in something to give them a sense of accomplishment, so we started putting all our lists of licensed electricians in the state on computer, and started lining up telephone numbers with the names that we had.

"We found that the apprentices in our local were somewhat isolated from the general membership and we weren't drawing on them the way we could have. So we focused in on the apprenticeship classes. We did five presentations down here at the school, and out of 780 apprentices, approximately 400 have volunteered to serve.

"We think we need about 600 or 700 people total to make it function. We have regional coordinators for the 14 different regions, we have one community coordinator for each city and town, and they are building telephoning trees. When that's completed we'll try to activate it, probably working on getting some interest in the 1990 Democratic state caucuses and convention."

At present the Zip Committee structure is only intended for union members, but Mason says that they hope to find a way to involve spouses and families. "During Question 2 we found a lot of wives and family members involved," he notes.

"The Zip Committee structure is getting away

from the kind of administrative roles that many leaders particularly in the business trades have adopted, and getting back more to an activist role. Inherent in the entire structure is a democratization of the local union, but those issues are too large simply to put inside the structure of a Zip Committee."

Community and Union Stop Privatization

This chapter thus far has dealt with union-community coalitions from the point of view of union members. It may also be useful to get the perspective of the other half of the coalition. Shafik Abu-Tahir is a long-time community activist who worked with AFSCME Local 427 in Philadelphia to stop the privatization of trash collection. Here Abu-Tahir tells how the coalition worked from the community organizations' standpoint.¹ He is vice-president of the Haddington Leadership Organization, one of Philadelphia's oldest community organizations, a member of New African Voices Alliance (a group of African-American organizers), and a coordinator of Community Awareness Network, an alliance of community groups throughout Philadelphia.

When Philadelphia Mayor Wilson Goode ran for re-election in 1987, he made privatization of city services the heart of his campaign and indicated he would contract out trash collection. Once Goode was elected, the city and the local media began to run newspaper and television stories with racist overtones about sanitation workers who were allegedly drunk on the job or illegally using city equipment for private jobs.

The sanitation workers were represented by AFSCME Local 427. "These 2,400 workers, responsible for trash and garbage collection and disposal, are the historic core of the union," write AFSCME officials Ann Cohen and James Dooley.

When leaders of community groups heard about the city's plans for privatization, they were concerned that their communities would lose control over essential city services, and might even lose some of those services. They were especially concerned about a vital health service like garbage collection. They also feared that some members of their community would lose their jobs. They began to think about their relationship with the unions and what they might do.

"The problem," says Shafik Abu-Tahir, "was that labor and organized neighborhood groups were not working together in any consistent way. We would come together periodically, year after year, and we would build one disconnected event and another disconnected event. We were event building, but we weren't movement building." So Abu-Tahir and other community activists saw the fight over privatization as a way to build an on-going alliance.

They sat down with the leadership of Local 427 and proposed that the union and the community groups launch a campaign. "We told them," says Abu-Tahir, "that we would work with them to change their image, to show how valuable the sanitation workers are and to show why it was important not to allow

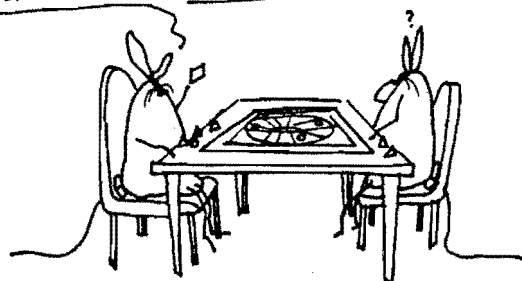
those services to be privatized.

"The union leadership was a little skeptical that these things could be done, or that people would rally to defend sanitation workers." But the various neighborhood organizations and the union formed a coalition: the Committee Against Privatization (CAP). Abu-Tahir and Cynthia Bowens, another member of New African Voices, were elected the chairpersons.

"Community Awareness Network people were already in touch all over the city, so it was a matter of making phone calls," says Abu-Tahir. "We don't do mailings, because people don't respond. We do voice-to-voice. So we started calling up all of our contacts



FOR A GREEN WEDGE, AND THE GAME,
"WHAT CAUSED THE FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE?"



who in turn at their own meetings would raise the issue. Remember, Community Awareness Network is a network of organizations, so at each meeting we were putting out the story of what was going on with privatization."

There had been 13 people at the first meeting between the community groups and the union. There were 70 at the second meeting, a hundred at the third, and never less than a hundred through the rest of the campaign.

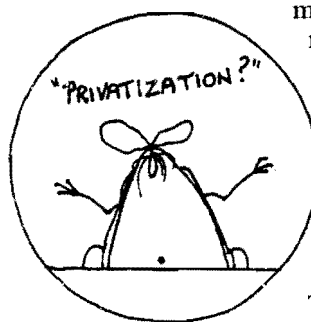
House Meetings

"We held informal meetings, meaning inviting shop stewards and other leaders of Local 427 to our homes," says Abu-Tahir. "We did a lot of house meetings where there would be four or five sanitation workers and a couple of us, making sure that everybody was being talked with in a more personal way and that we were understanding their concerns." Community activists stood out by their trash cans on pick-up days and handed out leaflets to the sanitation drivers. Some drivers were recruited to give leaflets to other drivers at the barns in the morning. Once the union members were solidly behind the campaign, the Committee Against Privatization began to take the issue to the community. "We handed out educational leaflets and fact sheets," says Abu-Tahir. "We went on radio shows, and that helped, particularly when we were on a major Black radio station."

In the course of this work CAP and Local 427 developed a strong argument against contracting out trash collection. The City had suggested that the work be contracted to Waste Management Inc. "We focused on the fact that if Waste Management came in, there might be certain communities that they wouldn't want to come into. They might decide to charge to come into certain communities, declaring those communities unsafe, or whatever. We helped people understand that having a private company meant that a decision about a major service in Philadelphia would be made privately, and that we would have no say about a major service that we need."

Much of the organizing work was done using fact sheets. "The fact sheet is primary," says Abu-Tahir, "not giving it out—but discussing it with somebody. Not just saying, 'Here, read this,' but actually creating some place where you can go over the information. We work slow, because we're always looking for organizers, not just protesters. We want people who want to do things, so we say, 'We'll give you this fact sheet, we'd like to know when we can come back and discuss it with you.' People see our sincerity, so they say, 'Yeah, well, come over on Saturday.' So to us, organizing work is door to door work. It's strenuous, but it works for us.

"So the key thing was the educational work, convincing the sanitation workers themselves that not only could they fight, but they could win. As more and more people showed up at more and more things, the union leadership became stronger and stronger and stronger, and began to really flex some muscles."



CAP and Local 427 organized a mass rally, held in a church, and, says Abu-Tahir, "unfurled a fightback strategy. The sanitation

workers would have to be the base of that strategy and they would need to take a strong, strong stand."

CAP pressed for and got a City Council hearing. Community activists spoke, as did Local 427 President James Sutton and District Council 33 organizer Bobbie Turner. "We turned out hundreds of people for the hearings," says Abu-Tahir, "and again, the majority were the sanitation workers who came straight from the yards. We also had tremendous support from various community organizations."

The pressure was strong enough that Mayor Goode withdrew his proposal for privatizing trash collection. CAP and Local 427 had won.

After that victory, the Committee Against Privatization was broadened and became Philadelphians United to Save City Services. It began working with other unions that were also battling privatization. Many of those battles were also won, using some of the same tactics.

Abu-Tahir feels that his groups' work is strengthened by their practice of holding regular

"political socials." "We hold political socials every month where we invite the people we're working with to come and eat together and discuss where we're going together. They're usually sponsored by New African Voices, and we bring in people from Community Awareness Network, or Asian-Americans United, or South Philadelphians United. And we really confront each other in a positive and principled way, to strengthen each others' work. This is what we in Philadelphia have come to call 'the collective dialogue.'"

Action Questions

1. How do you best define your workplace's community? Is it the surrounding neighborhood, the entire city or region? An ethnic group within the area? Is the community your customers or clients? To what communities does your workforce have the closest ties?

2. Make a list of the most important organizations in your community. Include religious, social, civil rights, women's, consumers', and other groups. What are your relations with those organizations?

3. What group in your union is responsible for maintaining contacts with the community or with your customers or clients? Is there a community relations or social action committee? Do union members regularly speak to community groups? How often have you been in contact with community groups?

4. What issues at your workplace also affect the community or your customers or clients? Economic

(quality, cost)? Environmental? Health and safety? (For example, pollution affects workers' health and community health. Caseload size affects working conditions and service to clients.)

5. How would you present the issue so as to make common cause with your community? How would you begin to organize around that issue? Who would you talk to first?

6. What are the most important media in your community? TV? Radio? Press? What union body keeps in touch with them? What have you done lately? Is there a way to promote your union in the public eye?

7. What existing community programs are you involved in? Does your union simply donate money, or does the program build bonds between rank and file workers and grassroots community people?

8. Does the community have some pressing need which the union might take the initiative on? Recreational programs for youth? Low cost housing? Improving health or education facilities? What can the union do to help, in a way that also helps the union and builds ties between workers and community activists?

Notes

1. This section is based on an interview with Shafik Abu-Tahir and on an article by Ann Cohen and James Dooley, "Privatizing Philly vs. AFSCME DC 33," *Labor Research Review* #15, pp. 14-23.



Steward's Corner — March 1985

How We Got the Community To Back Our Strike

by Patricia DeVinney

In June 1982 Nurses United (Communications Workers Local 1168) was certified to represent 800 registered nurses at Buffalo General Hospital. Eight months later, we were still struggling to negotiate a first contract, without any cooperation from management. The same union-busting law firm which tried to break our original organizing drive appeared at the negotiating table. We decided it was time to begin mobilizing for a possible strike.

Not only was the concept of a strike new to the primarily female workforce, but a tremendous conflict arose between the possible need for a strike and our responsibility to the Buffalo community. We were the primary providers of hands-on care to the sick and dying. How would the community react to 800 nurses striking the largest private hospital in Buffalo?

We wanted the community to understand that better patient care results from better working conditions, and that as nurses we wanted to feel pride in giving the very best care to our patients. We wanted the community to understand our need for just compensation and decent benefits. For example, we had one of the worst health care plans around!

Campaign Begins

Once we defined the issues we wanted to convey, we mapped out an escalating campaign designed to gain maximum community support. We paid particular importance to developing good relations with the media. CWA encouraged us and supplied us with media specialists and resources.

An outline of our campaign would look like this:

1. Press release announcing campaign
2. Educational ads in newspapers outlining issues
3. Leafleting the public at the hospital, explaining our stance
4. Radio spots
5. Rally
6. Informational picketing at the hospital
7. Strike vote and strike
8. Rallies attended by union and community supporters as well as Nurses United.

We launched our campaign with a press release announcing a series of public information events for the month of February. These included a series of educational ads in the major Buffalo Sunday

newspaper focusing on the concerns of the nurses. The first ad was headlined "Leaflet Handouts Monday February 14—Nurses Protest Contract Delays." After describing the nurses' plight and the planned leaflet distribution, the ad ended with, "We are dedicated to the best in patient care on two feet."

The leaflets distributed to the people entering and leaving the hospital were titled:

1. Hospital Administration's Bargaining Record. Do You Call This Bargaining in Good Faith?
2. An Open Letter to the Buffalo Community
3. All We Want Is To Practice Nursing the Way We Were Taught.

The response was very positive.

The second phase of our public information program began with a rally in support of the nurses, held at a church within view of the hospital. Three-minute radio spots on four major stations, spoken by the nurses themselves, announced the rally and discussed the problems confronting the nurses.

It was a frigid day February 26 for the rally, called "Contract Now—Help Me Keep On Caring." Nevertheless, it was well attended. There were balloons, picket signs, and prominent speakers, and it was well covered by the media.

By this point, the community was becoming aware of the nurses' problems. The sincerity of our approach was working. The public was viewing us in a positive light.

Informational Picket

After failing in continued attempts at negotiating, we set up an informational picket on March 21. Another quarter-page newspaper ad was placed, headlined "How Long Can We Work Without A Contract?"

Still there was no progress in negotiations. In fact, the union-busting lawyer representing the hospital took a two-week vacation. This spurred us to put out a press release entitled, "Negotiations Too Tough?

Hospital Takes A Break, Nurses Take A Strike Vote." We announced a second informational picket on April 6 and a strike vote April 11.

"We don't want to go on strike or even 'talk strike,'" we told the community, "but the hospital hasn't left us with any other choice. We have to let them know we are completely serious about this situation."

With 92 percent of our members voting, 84 percent authorized a strike. Media coverage from this point on was regular. By now, we were on respectful terms with any of the reporters covering our struggle. After two and a half months of talking with us, the media was able to transmit our issues to the public.

Strike

There were no surprises on May 1 when the nurses finally went out. The public knew us, trusted us. We had given plenty of notice of our issues and concerns.

It took the hospital 80 days to back down from its union-busting position to finally settle the contract. Nurses United could only feel deep gratitude to all the community for their help on the picket lines, for support in other hospitals by wearing red ribbons, for the Buffalo Philharmonic's benefit concert, for the resolution of support from the Buffalo Common Council (their first involvement in a labor issue since 1949), and for two tremendously inspiring rallies, each numbering 600-700 people. The Buffalo General Hospital could only hang its head in shame.

Our first contract is not perfect, but it is a good first contract. As a result of our prolonged strike, we have a heightened sense of community and of all the skills needed to organize internally and externally. Our strength came from the participation of the membership.

[Patricia DeVinney is Executive Vice-President of Communications Workers of America Local 1168.]

Contract Campaigns 8.

This chapter is about mobilizing the membership to back up their bargainers well in advance of a strike deadline. It should be read together with Chapter 9 on Strikes, since, in practice, a winning strike is usually based on a strong contract campaign—and an effective contract campaign must include the threat of a strike or a slowdown. The ideas discussed in these two chapters are essentially interchangeable, but this chapter will focus on pre-deadline tactics.

First we will discuss two smaller tactics used within contract campaigns, and then look at entire campaigns carried out by three groups of workers: factory workers, nursing home workers, and hospital workers.

See the story of HERE Local 26 in Chapter 20 and Chapter 13 on Corporate Campaigns for more contract campaign tactics.

Open Negotiations

Brandon Weber was president of USW Local 3844 in Kansas City at a small manufacturing plant. "After we drew up the list of proposals," he says, "we made it clear that after each negotiating session we would tell the members exactly what was happening.

"To help with this we got together a contract committee of about 20 people (in a bargaining unit of 200) to get the word out. We posted the names of everybody on the contract committee so people knew who to talk to. After the first session when the company threw their first set of proposals at us—big time concessions—we showed people exactly what they were asking for and how bad the proposal looked.

"This was well received by the people. In fact, when the company (and especially the company lawyer) tried to convince us to stop telling people what was being discussed at the table, that very evening we had a union meeting. We took a vote that we keep the negotiations open. It was nearly unanimous, the biggest union meeting we ever had except for the final proposal meeting.

"Even our USWA Staff Representative was opposed to telling the membership what was happening, which was another reason we took a vote at the union meeting."

For more on Local 3844's successful contract campaign, see Chapter 6.

Relating Grievance Fights to Contract Fights

Fights around grievances can be used to help shape future contracts. Enid Eckstein explains how Service Employees Local 285 in Boston targets grievances to develop contract language.

"We have our contract expiring in July at Boston City Hospital," Eckstein explains. "One thing we want to do is show how our contract language is inadequate. So in October in all of our bargaining units we'll do a training on the same day where people will focus on three issues that are the language issues they most want to change. Then in November and December our grievances will have a strategic focus. On a given day each of these bargaining units will submit a grievance targeted to their contract language, and then publicly organize around it.

"For example, staffing language. We'll be doing something to prove that the contract does not address inadequate staffing. Maybe we'll do surveys to prove short staffing on the week that we file the grievance. And then we'll go to the press and talk about the fact that the contract is inadequate.

"If you get thirty grievances and management tearing its hair out, you've obviously been successful."

Contract Preparations at GE

Charlie Ruiter is the business agent for IUE Local 201 at General Electric's Lynn, Massachusetts plant. The local has 5,000 members, a strong steward

system, and a reputation for militancy. "We're the only local in the country that's consistently rejected national GE contracts," says Ruiter. "The last GE contract contained concessions, and it was ratified across the country by three to one. Our local rejected it."

Ruiter says the local has done "just about anything and everything" to organize the members before the contract expires. "We have 40 buildings here and we'll meet with a couple of buildings at a time. On every shift two or three executive board members will have a lunchtime meeting with the workers. We might have 25 different meetings before the contract is delivered. We read the minutes of the contract negotiations—the union's demands and the company's responses—and we bring them up to date on what's going on. We've been doing that for probably the last nine years.

"For instance, I go to a building at lunch, and all the people will come outside. We'll get a soapbox and read the minutes of the contract negotiations. Every-

body wears a union t-shirt or a union hat that day. And we also have a demonstration for the whole plant where we close off the street in front of the plant.

"We set up a community strike support team that tries to talk to the different churches and civic organizations. The team explains about what the workers are in it for, and what the concession package may be. They're mostly rank and file stewards."

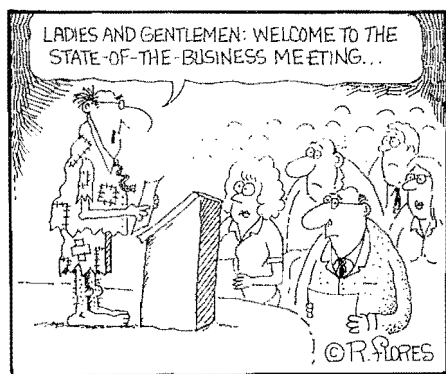
The local reaches out to other GE workers around the national contract, both in the IUE and in other unions. "We've sent buses to the major GE location in Schenectady, [New York] and leafleted their plant," says Ruiter. "We've been threatened with physical violence for that. Threatened with arrest and escorted out of town by the police. We raise hell."

To prepare for the national contract expiring in June 1991, Local 201 went further. Leaders drew up a proposal for a nationally coordinated contract campaign and sent it to the other IUE-GE locals. Following is a summary of the "201 Contract STOMP (Strategy To Organize Membership Participation)."

1. Stewards and volunteers distribute and collect contract surveys person-to-person on the shop floor. Members rate demands one through ten. Report results to the International and to the membership.

2. Choose two or three demands that can be supported nationwide and that unify potential splits in your membership along age, skill or rate lines. Invent a short slogan for each demand.

3. Distribute buttons with slogans for members to wear at work. Design T-shirts with overall theme. Organize "wear your T-shirt" days.



4. Establish contract newsletter. Post on shop floor. Print members' opinions about contract issues.

5. Announce schedule of lunchtime meetings. Meet on company property during lunch break, an NLRB-protected activity. Bring members up to date on progress at bargaining table or news from other locals. Even when there is no news to report, meeting as a big group strengthens the resolve of members and has a huge effect on management.

6. Issue 24-hour strike notice for a two-hour strike. Schedule a two-hour rally that overlaps the two main shifts. Have speaker from International as keynote. Use public place adjacent to plant. All-out publicity to membership.

7. Form a strike committee. Publish strike benefits and picket line schedule.

8. Publish offer. Give members time to review it. Hold meeting for membership discussion of offer. Executive board and steward council make recommendations.

In mid-July 1990 five GE locals from four Internationals met in Lynn. They exchanged information about local conditions and took steps toward more local-level coordination than had ever existed before among the many GE unions. As they toured the Lynn plant, they were warmly greeted by stewards and members. The representatives voted to put out a common T-shirt with the logos of all 13 GE unions and the slogan "We're One in '91," and to exchange union newspapers. They pledged to meet again three months later and called for unified demonstrations throughout GE on the same day.¹

A Contract Campaign for Nursing Homes

John Fussell is vice-president of New England Health Care Employees Union 1199, affiliated with the Service Employees International Union. Many of his members work in nursing homes that are privately owned, are state regulated, and rely heavily on Medicaid reimbursements.

Fussell explains how 1199 thinks through a contract campaign. Some of the considerations are unique to health care workers, but many are common to all workplaces.

A Survey To Formulate Demands

Fussell feels that the particular bargaining demands the union chooses are very important, both to unify the workers and to win the support of the public. Frequently 1199 begins with a survey, both to identify the members' needs and to kick off the campaign.

The issue of staffing, says Fussell, is often a good place to begin. "You can unite people around the staffing issue, because it affects their quality of work but it also affects the quality of care they're providing to patients. It paints the union as being out front in fight-

ing for quality care, and that becomes very important when inevitably we need support from the community, from political people, and from state agencies."

The union gets the members to make a timetable showing when various areas are not covered by adequate staff. "We ask them to keep track of how many aides were on the floor, how many LPNs, how many RNs. And we ask them to list problems that occurred as a result."

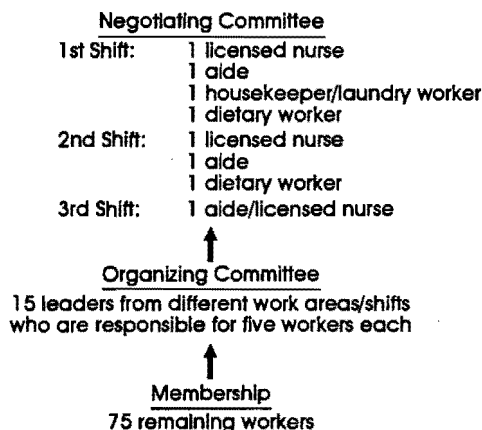
"In a nursing home it means that people may not be getting bathed frequently enough, their dental work may not be getting cleaned enough. In more extreme cases, a patient falls out of bed and is hurt, and because people are stretched so thin, they don't get around to that person until that person has been on the floor for a while."

Workers in other types of workplaces could also make up such timetables. A demand for more training, for instance, could be backed up with a timetable showing all the times materials were wasted because a machine was run by an untrained operator. A health and safety timetable could list all the trips to the medical department and all the sick days taken because of noxious fumes in a certain area.

The Contract Committee

The first step in building a contract committee, says Fussell, is identifying the "natural leaders within the workplace." Some will be stewards, others will be new activists who have not previously been involved in the union but who are interested in the contract.

In New England 1199 the workers elect both a negotiating committee and an organizing committee. The diagram below presumes 100 workers in the bargaining unit:



"Each action planned leading up to the deadline has two purposes," Fussell explains, "to build the organization and to test the organization. It is foolish for an organizer to test that organization in a strike. An organizer cannot rely on statements of support for a strike, the organizer must be able to objectively ascertain whether or not the organization is capable of striking."

"So first you test people's commitment by doing

a number of other activities prior to the strike. Perhaps you do informational picketing, making it clear to people that if we can't get a very strong majority of our members to participate in informational picketing, then we can't expect that they're going to participate in a strike. You go through different levels of activity that challenge the members to a more difficult confrontation with the employer, and then analyze the results with a committee."

New England 1199 typically gives each member of the organizing committee a form to fill out. It has information about the committee member herself at the top and keeps track of which members are participating in which actions leading up to the strike.

Committee Members' Organizing Chart
Similar to that Used by New England 1199

Committee Member: Jane Doe

Phone 111-1111
Shift: First
Job: Nurse assistant
Dept.: Nursing B Wing
Days off: Mo/Tu
Hrs/Wk: 40

Contract Activities:

1. Distribute leaflet 2/18/87
2. Button day 3/10/87
3. Circulate petition 3/14/87
4. Attend statehouse rally 4/1/87
5. Informational picketing 5/15/87

Name	Telephone	Shift	Job	Dept.	1	2	3	4	5
Mary Finn	222-3333	1	na	B nurse	x	x		x	x
Jean LeBlanc	333-4444	1	na	B nurse	x	x			
Mai-ling Liu	555-6666	1	na	B nurse	x	x		x	x
Addie Keys	666-7777	1	na	B nurse	x		x	x	
Anna Garcia	777-8888	1	na	B nurse	x	x	x	x	x

The committee must also prepare in advance to deal with the external forces which will affect the strike if it comes about. These include:

The media. Before the strike begins, says Fussell, the union asks itself: "Who are our contacts in the media? What kind of press releases can we use on radio, TV, and in the newspapers to heighten the pressure on the employer and the community's awareness of what our fight is about?"

Politicians. Because even private nursing homes are state regulated and usually federally funded (through the patients' Medicaid reimbursements) political figures are particularly important. "We make a list of the various political people that can put pressure on," says Fussell. "We will make requests on political leaders, city, state or federal, to help us reach a settlement and put pressure on management as necessary. Of course, management does the same thing, and generally they have a lot more play with these folks than we do."

The police. The union tells the police where they will be picketing.

The fire department. "If we're setting up an out-house or a fire barrel," Fussell explains, "we have to check with the fire department to make sure we're not in violation of any codes. We had a strike at Women and Infants Hospital in Providence, Rhode Island. It was December, a cold time to be on the picket line, and we had fire barrels. But the Fire Department said we couldn't use them because they were not covered and because you could only use that kind of thing outside if you were cooking on it."

"So our members from the maintenance depart-

ment welded covers on these fire barrels and put a stove pipe on them, and we got a bunch of potatoes and wrapped them in aluminum foil and kept a box of potatoes by the fire."

State agencies. Nursing home workers are under special pressures because of the nature of their patients, who are elderly and often sick. They are in a nursing home precisely because they are unable to take care of themselves.

"Everyone must understand that we will be the ones accused if any patients die," says Fussell. "We go on the offensive early on and request that the state put them in a hospital or another home setting where they can be properly cared for. We make it very clear that we don't want the patients caught in the middle of this situation."

"In our strikes in Massachusetts in 1987, we were able to get the state to move large numbers of patients, and it was tremendous, because then the employer was not able to play that media hype of 'the union is hurting the patients.'"

In 1989 many of the strategies described by Fussell were used on a larger scale in New York City, where another group of health care workers found themselves in a battle with hospital management.

1199 vs. the League of Voluntary Hospitals

In the summer of 1989 Local 1199 Drug, Hospital and Health Care Employees Union (RWDSU)² carried out a contract campaign and a series of short strikes among some 50,000 hospital workers in New York City which resulted in a resounding victory. As the *New York Times* reported, the union had used a "sophisticated strategy that even its opponents agree was carried out to near perfection," providing "the nation's labor movement with a badly needed ray of hope."³

The contracts at issue covered 40,000 employees of some 50 hospitals and nursing homes represented by the League of Voluntary Hospitals, as well as another 10,000 workers employed by the Catholic hospitals and some other institutions whose contracts followed the pattern set by the League. The workers are service, professional, technical, and clerical workers and registered nurses (RN's). The workforce is approximately 65 percent Black or Latin women.

Local 1199 has a long history of militancy and of cooperation with the Black and Latino civil rights movements. As labor historian David Montgomery has observed, "1199 has always been seen as something of a pacesetter" in the organization of public service workers.

However, in 1984 the local was in bad shape. The members had struck for 47 days and taken concessions. In 1986, says union spokesperson Moe Foner, "it was clear we had no leverage with the managements, so we accepted a contract that was really handed to us."

The union leadership was determined not to face the same situation in 1989. The union returned to its traditional approach of the 1950s and 60s: mobilizing its members, the community, and its allies in the civil rights community, and fighting in the political arena.

The first step was to begin organizing well in advance. "We put in place a year-and-two-month plan of work prior to contract expiration," says Dennis Rivera, president of the local, "rather than the month-and-a-half program that we were used to. We started by identifying the crisis in the health care system in New York State and City. We thought that it was important that we convey to the public that there was a health care crisis, and that in order to solve that crisis, the health care workers needed a good contract."⁴ In this way the union was defining the crisis of health care in its own terms, making decent wages and benefits for workers a part of the discussion.

The union began a media campaign: "We inserted a series of ads into the paper," says Foner, "particularly into the *Times* op ed page. We focused on the nature of the health care crisis and what was causing it."

"We organized scores of health care conferences and hearings in the boroughs and various parts of the city, in the communities where our members worked and lived. We got political people, community people, and the workers involved in participating in the hearings and testifying."

In early 1989 Mario Cuomo, the Democratic governor of New York, proposed major cuts in funding for health care. "So we conducted a campaign on various levels with the members, in the media and in the legislature," Foner recalls. "We organized through coalition building with all the other health care unions in New York, and with community groups, and with political forces. We even involved the managements, because they would be adversely affected by the cuts. We ended up with a massive demonstration in the state capital, the largest demonstration Albany had seen in maybe the past 30 years—some 12,000 people. And we were successful, the health care cuts were beaten back."

Foner believes this mobilization was key to the coming contract fight. "It put the union in fighting trim. It convinced the members that this was a different kind of union, a union that meant business. And that was part of the campaign to restore membership confidence in the union."

Organizing the Members in the Workplace

Local 1199 was also busy organizing within the workplace. "Each institution elected members of the negotiations committee," Foner explains, "so it was a committee of about 150 workers. On top of that you had several hundred contract captains, people who had access to members on the various floors. So you had a very large rank and file base."

"There was also a very strong educational and communications component," says Rivera. "Every week, for the life of the fight, every member received two mailings directly from the office. They would in-



Local 1199's one-day strike in July 1989.

Andrew Lichtenstein/Impact Visuals

form the membership of the activities and events as they occurred."

The union's key demands were for a nine percent wage increase and for higher contributions to the benefit funds. The hospital managements said that they had serious financial problems and could not meet the demands.

Despite the successful mobilization that stopped the health care cuts in the legislature, telephone polls indicated that the membership was still leery of striking. The 1199 leadership had to come up with a strategy that would give the membership the confidence to confront management, and if necessary to strike. They decided to call a one-day strike for July 11, 1989. A one-day strike would allow the union leaders to see how far the members were willing to go.

"The timing of the negotiations and actions were important," says Rivera. "We wanted a confrontation with the bosses not in the summer but in the fall. The summer, which is when 1199 went out on strike in 1984, is the time when the hospital has the lowest census as doctors go away and, for whatever reason, patients do not get as sick. A lot of New Yorkers are not in the city during the summer. In the fall, all of the doctors and staff are back to regular life....Also, by October 1, all the contracts 1199 had would expire, and we would get the greatest number of health care

workers out in the streets in the largest health care strike in America."

Meanwhile the union worked on dividing the employers. The union negotiated with the hospitals affiliated with the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Manhattan, headed by Joseph Cardinal O'Connor, which included three or four major institutions. "Cardinal O'Connor," says Foner, "is conservative on all issues except labor."

The union and the Catholic hospitals reached an agreement on July 7 covering 4,200 members. "We got 8½ percent in each year of a two-year contract, with improvements in the benefit funds and other improvements," Foner explains. "The significance of it was, the Cardinal joined with Dennis Rivera in a press conference announcing the settlement, which was very, very widely covered. And we then had a moral issue. The posture we were taking was, if the Catholic hospitals can afford it, then the other hospitals can too, because they are all funded the same way. They all get state, federal, city funds. They all have similar problems. They employ the same kind of workers. They're all in the same location. If A can do it, why can't B?" The union placed newspaper advertisements arguing this position. The union's slogan was: "Do the right thing—like the Catholic hospitals did."

One-Day Strikes

On July 11 Local 1199 called the first of a series of one-day strikes. Rather than a traditional strike with pickets at all the hospitals, it asked all strikers to assemble at 57th St. outside Central Park, and then to march across town to Tenth Avenue where the headquarters of the League of Voluntary Hospitals was located. At the appointed hour somewhere between 20,000 and 30,000 hospital workers arrived. Led by Dennis Rivera and other members of the executive board, and marching with the Rev. Jesse Jackson and New York mayoral candidate David Dinkins, the workers marched to confront management. It was the largest labor demonstration outside of a Labor Day parade that New York had seen in many years and it attracted the attention of all the media.

The effect of this first one-day strike and march on the Local 1199 membership was dramatic. "It's what I call the 'I Am Somebody syndrome,'" says Foner. "The workers looked around and saw they were in the company of thousands of people, and that gives you a sense of power."

The second one-day strike was called for July 24. Some 600 union buses brought workers from various locations to St. Luke's Hospital. They marched through the city once again, to the rhythm of salsa, samba and civil rights marching songs, this time to Mt. Sinai Hospital. The marchers chanted, "We're going to beat back the bosses' attack."

At the rally, Jesse Jackson compared the hospital workers' average \$344 a week wages to the \$450,000 a year salary of John Rowe, chief executive of Mt. Sinai Hospital, who also received a car, a chauffeur, and a free luxury apartment.

The union called a three-day strike on August 14-16, again accompanied by marches and rallies. This time the Local 1199 strikers were joined by CWA members striking against NYNEX and by UMW members striking against Pittston. The union was building for a planned general strike of the League hospitals to begin on October 4.

"A couple of other small institutions signed contracts," says Foner, "which was important because they were the poorest hospitals in the city. They were in the ghetto communities, such as Bronx Lebanon, Interfaith Medical Center. The media was beginning to pick up on our theme. If these poor hospitals can do it, there's no logical reason why the others can't."

"Then in September we were interrupted by the Democratic Party primary. We turned virtually all our activists into the Dinkins campaign [David Dinkins was the Black president of the borough of Manhattan who was running for mayor]. We had about two or three thousand people involved and we helped Dinkins win that primary." Local 1199 felt it was important to defeat Mayor Ed Koch, whose administration had been anti-union and racist. The leaders saw the Dinkins campaign as another way to mobilize members, and Dinkins' success, they felt, would strengthen their situation in the event of a strike.

During this same period the union continued to

hold events. "We had a huge rally at one of the major churches in Manhattan with all kinds of political people and community leaders and trade union leaders," Foner recalls. "And we had a breakfast at union headquarters with about 500 political leaders, where they signed a telegram to the directors of the hospitals calling upon them to negotiate a fair contract as the Catholic hospitals had done. And that telegram had more than the usual suspects. It had Democrats, Republicans, the leader of the state legislature, the majority leader of the assembly. And we inserted that with all the names in a full-page ad in the *Times*." Several newspapers came out with editorial positions



in favor of the union.

As it prepared for each of its one-day strikes, the union had conducted secret ballot strike votes. Now as the union faced its October 4 general strike deadline, the leaders organized among the members for that important vote. After these discussions, the membership—which less than a year before had been afraid to strike—voted over 90 percent in favor.

Local 1199 President Dennis Rivera was now in a position to say, "I really would rather have peace, but if they want a war, they are going to get a big war."⁵

With tens of thousands of hospital workers now prepared to take to the streets, the hospitals decided they did not want Rivera's big war. The League began to break apart. Presbyterian Medical Center, the largest hospital in the city, whose CEO Thomas Morris was the president of the League, broke ranks, met privately with the union and agreed to sign a contract. The union leaked that settlement to the press and it hit the streets on October 3. The hospitals began to line up and sign up. The union got wage increases of 7.5%, 7.5% and 5%, additional contributions to the benefit fund, and a training fund.

"These negotiations won us something even more important than money," said Rivera. "They earned us respect."⁶

Conclusions

There are several lessons to be learned about contract campaigns from the examples in this chapter. First, begin with long range planning, months or even

years in advance.

Second, create structures to involve and mobilize the membership. IUE Local 201 used its existing stewards; 1199 had its "contract captains."

Third, education is the first step. The stewards and other activists have to be educated themselves about the key goals, and then promote discussion and debate, one on one, among the membership to reach a common understanding about those goals.

Fourth, the membership has to be mobilized in increasingly challenging and difficult activities, perhaps beginning with wearing a button or a particular color on a "color day," and leading up to such actions as demonstrations and short strikes.

Action Questions

1. What is the economic situation of your company? Of your plant? Do you have any trusted friend in management or an office worker who can get you information about management's plans?
2. What is the essential goal of your contract negotiations, the thing that will make the difference between defeat and victory?
3. How do the members feel about the issue? Does the issue affect a small group, most people or everybody? Will it ultimately have an impact on everybody? How can you explain the issue in such a way that people will see the necessity to act?
4. Who would you have to put pressure on to win your goal? Local management? The head of the company? The head of the parent corporation? An outside financial institution like a bank?
5. How was your union's last contract campaign organized? What was good about it? Make a list. What were the weaknesses? What would you do differently next time?
6. When is your next contract expiration? How long in advance should you begin planning? When should you begin organizing for it?
7. How does your local decide on its contract proposals? Is there a special union meeting? Is it well attended? Is there a membership survey in the

workplaces? Who makes the final decisions?

8. What shape is your union in for carrying out united campaign actions? Do you have leaders in all departments or workplaces? How could you find and develop some new rank and file leaders?

9. What would be the first thing to do to get people involved in a contract campaign? A membership survey? Wearing a union button? Wearing a certain color on a specific day? Using a bumper sticker?

10. Draw up a timeline of events leading to your contract deadline.

Following is a broad example; yours should be more detailed.

January—Membership survey
 February—Union meeting votes on priorities
 March—Meetings in departments to build committees
 April—Union meeting, strike authorization vote
 Week 1—First color day
 Week 2—First action day, solidarity breaks
 Week 3—Second action day, rally at downtown company headquarters
 Week 4—Slowdown begins
 May 1—Union meeting, strike begins

11. Who should organize a contract campaign in your local? The executive board? A strike committee made up of the executive board and volunteers? A stewards council? An elected strike committee?

Notes

1. "GE Unions in Historic Visit to Lynn," *Electrical Union News*, July 20, 1990, p. 1.
2. The two 1199s in this chapter were once part of the same union.
3. Howard W. French, "The Hospital Workers Are The Envy of Labor Now," *The New York Times*, October 8, 1989.
4. Interview with Dennis Rivera, President of Local 1199, RWDSU, "Strategy and Tactics at 1199," *Economic Notes*, January-February 1990, Vol. 58, Nos. 1-2, pp. 7-8. All quotes from Rivera are from this interview unless otherwise noted.
5. "Impossible Dream Won in Technicolor," *Newsday*, October 5, 1989.
6. Howard W. French, "Strike Averted As Hospitals Reach Accord," *The New York Times*, October 5, 1989.

9. Strikes

Strikes can be divided into two kinds: political and economic.

The political strike aims at changing a government policy. Political strikes are rare in the United States, though they do occur from time to time. United Mine Workers locals in West Virginia, for example, struck in 1968 to pressure the state legislature to pass the Black Lung Bill. Many public employee strikes in the 1960s, 1970s and into the 1980s were illegal and were intended to force the state legislature to change the laws and recognize the right of public employees to bargain collectively.

Our concern in this chapter is with the economic strike, a strike over contractual issues such as wages, benefits and working conditions. However, even an economic strike has a political dimension as well. A strike leader who wants to win will look for the strike's implications beyond the company gates. A strike has a tendency to galvanize public opinion for and against. If the company or the public agency is particularly important, it may become a focus of concern to the entire community, or even to the nation. Other employers may see the success of the struck employer as crucial to their own future negotiations. The government may see the defeat of the union as important to its general policy, as happened with the PATCO strike in 1981.

At the same time other workers may see a victory for the union as making it more likely that they will win higher wages in the future. Unemployed workers may simply see the strike as a chance to get a job. The public may see the strike as a disruption, or it may sympathize with the workers with whom it has a longstanding relationship. Both management and the union will try to organize public opinion and influence other workers and the unemployed.

Winning a strike is not simply a question of organizing the union's members, but also of organizing allies: other workers, unions, community groups and political figures. While a strike has tactical, logistical

and an almost military quality to it, it is also essential to win the broader political battle.

For more on strike preparation, see Chapter 8, Contract Campaigns. For two examples of strikes over union recognition, see Chapter 18, and see the story of a strike for a first contract at Yale in Chapter 20. Strikes are also dealt with in Chapter 10, Wildcat Strikes, Chapter 11, Sitdown Strikes, and Chapter 13, Corporate Campaigns.

Who Wins a Strike?

Every time a strike occurs, some company official, some newspaper columnist, or unfortunately, some union leader is bound to say, "No one ever really wins a strike." All within earshot nod sagely, and the rank and file wonder what they're doing on the picket line. This age-old piece of wisdom is a lie, for two reasons.

First, those who use this line are referring to the fact that workers lose wages and employers lose profits during a strike. But because of the compounding effect, workers who win a raise by striking *do* make up their lost wages over the course of a few years, and make it up many times over, over their working lifetime.

Besides, the outcome of a strike can't be measured merely in dollars. In any strike the union risks its authority and the allegiance of the workers. If the employer defeats the union, the union may be seriously weakened or even destroyed. But if the union wins the strike, the workers may return to work with an attitude of such confidence and pride that management finds it difficult to take control of the shop floor.

Second, some strikes are stalemates, but most do have clear winners and losers. Think of P-9, PATCO, and Phelps-Dodge—big defeats for the labor movement. On the other side, think of the victories at Yale in 1984 and at Pittston and NYNEX in 1989. There is no ambiguity about who won those battles.

In the bargaining atmosphere of the 1990's, "winning" may consist of "resisting concessions" rather than making big gains. But winning strikes is still possible, just as it was in every other decade. The following examples will show how it can be done. See the end of this chapter for some guidelines on running and winning strikes.

Oregon Public Employees Strike & Roll

In 1987 the Oregon Public Employees Union, SEIU Local 503, carried out a series of dramatic "rolling strikes" with whistle-blowing flying squads shutting down state office buildings and garages in one city after another. Organizing such a strike often begins years before in a campaign to prepare the membership. In the mid-1980s Suzanne Wall, an SEIU organizer, was assigned to work in Oregon. Her job was to help rebuild the Oregon Public Employees Union.

"We had a falling apart membership," says Wall. "We were losing about 500 members a year. We didn't have agency shop on a state-wide contract, it could be

things that people cared about.

"For example, Guns and Roses was a real hot issue in the Department of Motor Vehicles. People were really into this rock group and they weren't allowed to have their posters. So we had to fight for the right to Guns and Roses.

"The strike itself would never have happened if we hadn't done two-and-a-half years of internal organizing ahead of time."

For example, the prison guards and other workers at the Oregon State Correctional Institute held a mock funeral, proclaiming the "death of dignity." "We videotaped that action," says Wall, "and then we would show it to other state workers including social workers, clerical workers, to show what other people were doing. They loved it.

"The important principle was that it was worksite by worksite. So, although the issues were statewide issues, what happened on individual worksites depended on what those workers were ready for, and what they chose to carry out."

Children's Services Pulls an 'Unstrike'

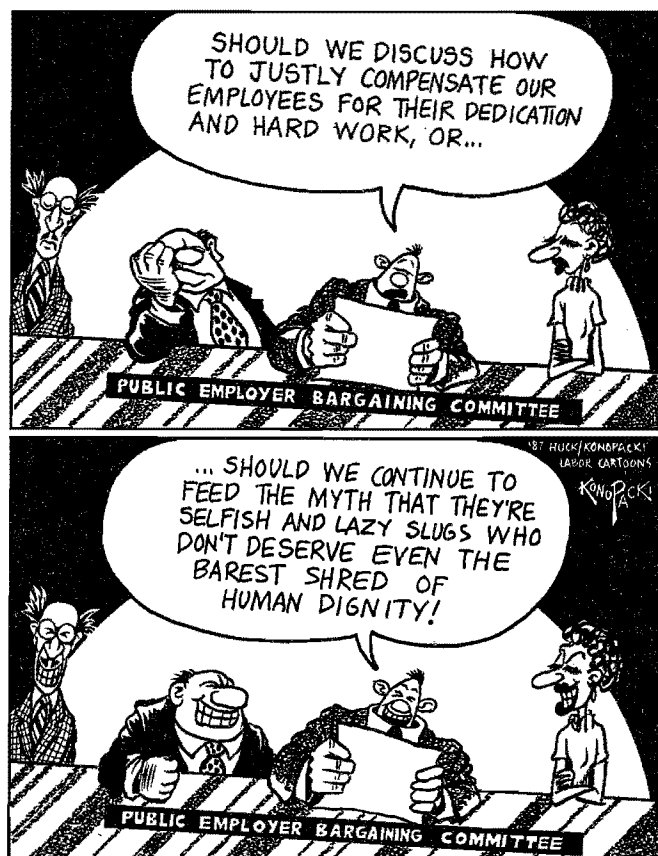
"A good example is the Children's Services Division," says Wall. "They are the protective services for abused children. At the time the governor had just been elected on a platform of the 'children's agenda,' claiming he was going to make Oregon a safe place for kids. Meanwhile, they weren't doing anything about staffing levels, so there were a lot of cases of abuse that the social workers couldn't get to.

"So we did an 'unstrike'—just the opposite of a strike. To demonstrate the long hours they put in, the commitment that they had, and that the governor's promises were fake, they did a work-in. They all stayed together after five o'clock, in solidarity, and worked, sometimes up till midnight.

"Of course the TV cameras loved it. They filmed these Children's Services workers carrying on with their jobs, and the hours go by and the TV cameras are showing the clocks and it's seven o'clock, and it's eight o'clock, and it's nine o'clock. They were doing a physical occupation of the building, but it was to provide those services that the governor claimed he was providing. So it really showed up his platform as hollow.

"It was tremendously empowering, and the workers loved it. We did it again in our 1989 contract struggle, and had vigils outside the offices. The vigils included other union members from agencies that also dealt with children, especially poor children, clients from client advocacy groups, and some parents who were dealing with CSD as clients themselves. So in that case it was empowering to the community too. The message was: Here is this problem, it feels like it's out of control. The union is trying to come up with some solutions, and we're all here to support that struggle."

Another important part of the campaign was the package of demands itself. The local looked for issues that affected many people. About 60 percent of the



de-authorized agency by agency. In some agencies we were extremely weak, with only a few members.

"When I got out there as a field representative, I got a list of the stewards. I would go to a workplace to find them, and they would say, 'Oh, so and so, he died years ago.' So we had a lot of work to do.

"We started out by looking for the ground floor

membership was clerical workers, so pay equity was one of them. See Chapter 15, *Organizing Around Women's Issues*, for how the local convinced the higher paid male workers to back the demand for pay equity for women.

Unity Breaks

One of the tactics developed to prepare for the rolling strikes was "unity breaks."

"These unity breaks were done by workers who never take their breaks, who just work straight through," Wall explains. "So it was a revolutionary idea for people to take their breaks together and actually leave the building. It also gave management a real sense of what a strike was going to be like."

"The stewards would stand up at 10 o'clock, blow their whistles, and everybody would leave. We would go out of the building, and we'd have music, we'd sing 'Solidarity Forever' in the parking lot, and we'd have coffee and doughnuts—food is an important union organizing principle. We would usually have bargaining updates if we were bargaining."

"But it was basically the feeling of solidarity and of people *walking out*. It was like practicing, so that by the time the rolling strike started, people had been doing unity breaks for quite a while. Later they were doing unity breaks while other people were on strike, and management didn't know if they were coming back or not."

Why Not a Traditional Strike?

Why did the Oregon Public Employees Union choose not to call a traditional statewide strike?

"My union," says Wall, "had never struck before. There had never been a state-wide strike by any public employees union [although such strikes are legal in Oregon]. We represent the majority of state workers, but not all of them. The membership was at varying stages of militancy, and we knew that if we did a traditional everybody-out-all-at-once kind of strike that people wouldn't be able to strike for long. They didn't have the money, they had no experience striking. And the state would save money, so we'd fund our own settlement by staying out and out and out until we had paid for what we needed."

"We decided to go back to the idea of why you do a work action in the first place—which is to do the unexpected. To put pressure on the employer to give in and to create so much chaos that they can't do business. So when we looked at ways of creating that chaos, people had great ideas about what were strategic dates when it would be great to shut down particular agencies."

How the Rolling Strike Worked

"There were 46 agencies involved in this," Wall says, "everything from highway workers, higher education workers, social workers, clerical workers at

Striking Part-Time

Strikes can be very hard on workers who have little economic power and fewer resources. Workers fear going on strike when they cannot live on the strike benefits and they could be out for a long time. One strategy in such situations is to strike part-time and spread the cost of the strike over more workers.

When meatcutters in rural Texas were faced with a strike, United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 540 spread both support for the strike and the cost of it.¹ Their strategy began in 1984 when Safeway demanded a \$1.69 pay cut from the meatcutters in 55 small town stores. Since strike benefits were only \$40 a week, and since the strike looked like it could be long, the union decided to strike only one store, in Bonham, Texas. The local could afford to pay the four meatcutters there \$300 a week. But then, to support the strike at that one store, it sent roving pickets into Dallas, Fort Worth and Wichita Falls.

Meatcutters in the 110 Safeway stores in those cities had recently ratified a no-concession contract. The union picketed the stores on Thursday, Friday and Saturday each week, the big shopping days. Only about 20 stores out of 110 were picketed at any one time, and no store was picketed more than twice in one week. Union leaders explained to the meatcutters that they should report to work, but that since their contract gave them the right to

refuse to work behind a picket line, if there were pickets they should exercise their right to go home. Over 95 percent of them did just that.

This part-time strike by the big-city meatcutters in support of the small town meatcutters had several advantages: it hurt the big city stores which were more lucrative for Safeway. Since the union never announced which stores it was planning to picket on any given day, the company found it difficult to deploy management replacement workers or other scabs. And the burden was lighter: no one was on strike more than two days a week (except the four butchers back in Bonham).

Safeway then decided to change the rules of the game. The company wrote to all employees in Dallas, Fort Worth and Wichita Falls, saying that those who honored the picket line would be fired.

The union feared that if workers continued to honor the lines they would face massive firings and then long court battles. So the union too changed the rules.

The UFCW called meetings of all the big city workers and asked them to pay \$50 per week into a strike fund for the small town workers. This would provide each one \$200 a week. After discussion and debate, the special assessment was approved in a secret ballot vote. Now all 55 rural stores struck. Within a month, they had settled a contract with no wage cut.

various state offices, civil rights division investigators, we had one of everybody. So the way we designed the rolling strike was to strategically hit the state in ways that they wouldn't expect on dates that they wouldn't expect—and then people went back to work. So although it was a nine-day strike most people were only out for three days.

"The strike took place in waves, and the waves were quite mixed. On the first roll the entire coast of Oregon went out at once, but in the valley, which is where the population center is, only certain worksites went out. And what it meant was management couldn't respond. They never knew where to target the scabs. They didn't know where to put management in. They didn't know what was going to happen next.

"And it really grasped the imagination of citizens as a whole and the media. We got great media coverage. The news media even came with us when our Flying Squadron took out the state office building in Portland.

"The 'Flying Squadron' was the heart and the soul of the strike. They were 350 people who pledged to stay out for the entire duration, do whatever it took. The Flying Squad went into the building and blew their whistles, said, 'Come on, we're on strike, everybody out of the building.' And the building just emptied. Then everyone marched up the street to Portland State University and emptied the university out—and, coincidentally, it was registration week.

"The state parks didn't go out until a weekend, one of the last peak September weekends when the weather is good and people go camping. For the welfare offices we tried to hit when they were preparing to issue food stamps."

How did the workers justify not preparing the food stamps, both to their members and to the public? "It was a hard thing," Wall admits. "We didn't totally solve that problem, because the governor certainly found clients to put on TV. But we did a better job of it in 1989, where we actually had created coalitions with poor people's and advocacy groups. We joined together around specific issues, like minimum wage legislation which we passed in Oregon. And we also let them understand that our issues were their issues, that if there were not enough employees to adequately staff the welfare offices, then we would have to close cases, because that's the only way we have of 'case management' and it literally means taking bread out of people's mouths."

"Last Chance to Strike!"

So it went on for eight days, strike waves rolling across the state, intermittently closing garages and offices, state parks and university libraries. "Probably the biggest day of hullabaloo," says Wall, "was the day that word came that the bargaining team was real close to settlement. A lot of people on the Capitol Mall hadn't yet had the opportunity to strike. So the Flying Squadron and the big picket line on the mall went into all these other mall buildings and just started scream-

ing, 'Five minutes, we only have five minutes left to strike! If you want to strike, now is your chance.'

"The people just came pouring out of the buildings and filled up the Capitol Mall, and then we marched through the Capitol building and up to strike headquarters a block away, and just celebrated. And it really was a celebration because people felt like *they* had won this contract.

"The actual cost of the settlement was \$9.6 million more than when we went on strike. We won pay equity increases for something like 5,000 of our members. In addition there were another 4,700, including the prison guards and social workers and a couple of other groups who historically had been way behind



The Flying Squadron took out the downtown state office building, then marched up the hill to call out Portland State University.

comparable jobs—they all were brought up. And management had also wanted to strip away all seniority rights, so that was a biggie.

"The membership was empowered. They felt they could do anything after that, and in a lot of cases that was true. In a lot of worksites it never returned to the status quo of management being in control. The workers believed that they could control the work. For a lot of the state workers the strike itself was the first time that they ever stood up and were defiant and they couldn't go back to the old way again.

"It didn't happen everywhere in the state, and that was the work that we spent the next two years doing, leading up to our next contract campaign. In our next contract campaign we knew we couldn't strike again."

1989 Strike Had To Be Different

The Oregon Public Employees decided not to do the same kind of rolling strike in 1989 as they had done two years previously. "The governor would be expecting it," says Wall. The union had learned that the state was planning to hire temporary workers and possibly mobilize the National Guard to work in the mental hospitals. The union would have to do something new and different.

"We designed a strategy in 1989 which impacted a much wider range of things," Wall explains. "Before we had just concentrated on the worksite." This time the union decided to go after the governor's "kitchen cabinet." "These are the people the governor really lis-

tens to. They aren't elected. They're heads of banks, owners of utility companies—the usual suspects.”

One of the companies represented in the governor's kitchen cabinet was the First Interstate Bank. “That bank loans money to state government,” Wall explains. “They sit in on a lot of government boards. They really run the state in a lot of ways. The governor has a lot of ties with the First Interstate Bank corporate structure.” The union began to do some research on the bank.

Meanwhile the governor made a promise that the state workers would receive pay raises, and he told them that it was “a promise you can take to the bank.” But when the state's proposal came down it contained so many take-aways on health care that it cancelled out the wage gains.

The union decided to make the governor's ties to First Interstate Bank and the “promise you can take to the bank” the linchpins of a contract campaign.

The head of the state executive department was named Miller. “So we had funny-money printed up and we called it ‘Miller Money,’” Wall remembers. “We used it in all kinds of worksite actions. People used it to pay for things that they had to have at work. They tried to take out loans for health insurance using this ‘Miller money’ as collateral.

“One of the things we did with ‘Miller money’ was to go to First Interstate. We made friendly visits to branches all over the state. Groups of workers went in and explained. ‘This is what we're struggling for: we want quality public services, and we know your bank is part of the decision making. We'd like you to call Bob, the head of the bank, and have Bob call Neil, the governor.’ And in some case we know that that happened. We did that all over the state on the same day, so the message definitely got to the top.

“Then we did a day of informational picketing, and some of our targets were the banks. So we constantly were getting ready to escalate the action. The pressure reached a certain point, and the government realized that there was a lot more to come, so we did get a settlement without having to go to more militant actions. It wasn't as dramatic in terms of empowering the membership as the rolling strikes had been. But the money was pretty equivalent; it was \$8 million different from the last offer.”

Lessons of the Rolling Strike

The most important lesson of the Oregon Public Employees' rolling strike of 1987 is that it took two-and-a-half years of preparation. It was slowly built from the ground up through activities in worksites throughout the state. In the process new leaders and activists came to the fore.

The union chose a tactic that would allow maximum mobilization of the membership and create the greatest disruption of state business, but would not reveal the union's weaknesses. If any particular office did not walk out, it was not clear whether that office was not supporting the union, or simply had not yet been called upon to strike.

The 350 members of the Flying Squadron with their energy and enthusiasm were effective in turning out other workers who may not otherwise have had confidence to participate. When scores of whistle-blowing strikers come running through your office, supervision is confused and work is disrupted in any case. Not only was the rolling strike fun for the participants; it was a tactic which captured the imagination of the public and the media.

Telephone Workers Strike NYNEX

The Communications Workers of America (CWA) contract campaign and strike against NYNEX telephone company in 1989 was a turning point for the union, the first time that it had attempted to systematically mobilize its members prior to contract expiration.

“We had three objectives,” says CWA Vice-President Jan Pierce. “One was to get a reasonable wage settlement with no bonuses or any increases tied to production, profits or anything else.... The second was to preserve our fully paid health care plan. The third was to solidify our relationship with the IBEW and preclude them from playing one union off against the other. We accomplished all three objectives.”²

Steve Early, a representative for the CWA, was deeply involved in the campaign. “The players on the union side,” Early explains, “were two unions, CWA and IBEW. Between them they have 60,000 members at NYNEX in about 40 different locals in six north-eastern states. Most of the unionized employees of NYNEX work for two local telephone company subsidiaries, New York Tel and New England Tel. The company is one of the biggest regional telephone companies in the country and one of the largest companies in the world.

“The background of the bargaining was that in 1986, and prior to that when NYNEX was part of the overall Bell System, there had never been very good relations between IBEW and CWA. In 1986, for example, when health care cost shifting was an issue that led to a nine-day strike by CWA, the then leadership of the IBEW locals and their district signed a ‘me-too’ agreement with the company, didn't go out on strike, and essentially left us to fight the battle against cost shifting on their behalf. They got the benefits of anything that we won automatically, without them having participated in the struggle.

“So in 1986 the company succeeded in its longstanding divide-and-conquer strategy, and their strategy going into 1989 was to divide and conquer again. And our strategy was, for the first time, to build a relationship to the IBEW that would be the basis for joint bargaining on a regional basis, a joint contract campaign, and if necessary strike activity.”

After the 1986 contract settlement, the old IBEW leaders were voted out, and a new leadership more receptive to working with the CWA was voted in. In the summer and fall of 1988 the two unions agreed to joint regional negotiations, and proposed to the com-

pany that a joint CWA-IBEW team sit down to bargain with NYNEX. The company, as was its right under the law, refused to enter into joint negotiations. "So," explains Early, "we attempted to coordinate our bargaining in two locations, Boston and New York, by having representatives of each union at the other union's bargaining table."

The CWA and IBEW also agreed to run a common campaign of membership education and mobilization for almost a year before the contract expired. "We had as a goal," explains Jan Pierce, "to have one coordinator, an activist—whether he or she was a steward, officer or rank and file worker—for every 10 members. We would communicate to them and they would talk to individual members."

The CWA took the lead in organizing this program. Previously, in April 1988, the CWA's Executive Board had approved Mobilization Goals (see box), with the idea that the union might either strike or engage in an inside strategy, continuing to work under the contract while pressuring management to make a fair settlement. These goals and a timeline were adopted by the CWA throughout the NYNEX system and guided the organizers' and activists' work over the next 10 months.

"Through a training program in each local we got all the stewards and any other activists who could be recruited to act as local union, building or worksite coordinators," Early explains. "These coordinators would hand out literature and organize workplace demonstrations and essentially keep people as well organized as possible throughout the whole run-up to the contract expiration."

"On the CWA side we recruited about 3,000 coordinators, mailed them the mobilization bulletins every month, and mailed them leaflets that they were then encouraged to distribute one-on-one in the workplace." These coordinators were the backbone of the contract campaign.

Step One: Education

The first stage of the campaign, says Early, "was to educate people about what we knew NYNEX was going to demand: employee contributions for health coverage. We had to make sure that people were willing to stick together to resist those demands, even if the company tried to get its foot in the door with a rather modest initial contribution."

"We tried to show people where they would be heading if we got on this open-ended cost-shifting escalator: the \$10 a week the company was looking for would just be in the first year; by the end of the three-year contract, people would have been paying for 30 percent of the cost of their benefits."

"We also did a lot of education around the 'flexible benefits' carrot that the company was dangling. This was another option they were proposing which would enable single, younger, healthier people to get money back from the company if they chose a more limited menu of medical coverage. So you would end up potentially with a group of people who were

being asked to go out on strike against cost-shifting, when they, because of their individual circumstances, didn't need the normal medical coverage, wouldn't have elected it, and would have been making money off the deal. So we had to nip that in the bud, and get people to understand that this was a concept that attacked the whole concept of group coverage and shared cost."

A Test of the Mobilization Network

In the spring of 1989, well before the August 5 contract expiration, NYNEX distributed to all employees payroll deduction cards authorizing a weekly \$10 deduction for medical benefits. The company threatened that employees who failed to return the cards would have to pay higher deductibles. If a significant number of employees signed such deduction cards, it would obviously undermine the union's attempt to resist NYNEX's cost-shifting plan.

"The real test of the mobilization coordinators network was when the company put out the payroll deduction cards," says Early. "As a counter-campaign we encouraged everyone to turn the cards in unsigned to their stewards, so that these cards could be dumped on the bargaining table on the first day of negotiations as a strong demonstration of rank and file opposition to cost-shifting. Some 85 to 90 percent of people in the CWA bargaining unit refused to fill them out and did turn them in to the union."

The mobilization coordinators' network was then used to organize the members in many other activities. As part of the "Fight Against Cost Shifting" (FACTS) campaign, the union put out FACTS buttons, organized a FACTS day where everybody wore red,

CWA's Mobilization Goals

1. Identify mobilization coordinator for every worksite; count number of members and non-members; set membership goals for next 12 months.
2. Prepare for and implement one-on-one program in every worksite. Distribute material on key issues; systematic effort to sign up non-members around those issues; keep track of results.
3. Issue bimonthly a mobilization newsletter for every major contract.
4. Encourage and track the frequency of worksite meetings.
5. Use convention as giant mobilization kick-off—our 50th anniversary means back to our roots and back to basics.
6. Develop community-based support on our key issues.
7. Develop financial strategies including proxies and "CWA annual reports to stockholders," to further leverage our clout but in proportion to management's response.
8. Prepare well in advance to use alternatives to strikes and to strike if necessary.

and did informational picketing.

"We also used the mobilization network to collect proxies from employees who were shareholders in NYNEX," says Early. "We got 15,000 or 16,000 people to turn over their proxies to the unions. We had a very militant presence at the shareholders meeting in May, including the employee meeting the night before that was taken over by six or seven hundred union members who confronted the top executives with their opposition to cost-shifting."

The union also mobilized the membership on the job. "We had a series of events," Pierce explains, "everything from wearing a button, to standing up at work for five minutes, to gathering outside the work location and going into work together, to working by the rules, to overtime embargoes. We wanted to change the balance of power at the bargaining table and we thought that we could do it by demonstrating unity in our ranks and solidarity with the IBEW. The IBEW tracked with us in almost all of these programs."

"As we got closer to the deadline," says Steve Early, "we organized people to participate in direct action that would have more of a disruptive effect: brief, concerted actions involving everyone standing up at the same time, or arriving late, or engaging in other activities that subjected them to more risk. We did start to have suspensions for workplace activity that took place in the last few weeks before the contract expired."

Behind the whole mobilization campaign was the idea of increasing commitment and risk. "We started with things that didn't involve a lot of risk, that didn't involve much of a time commitment, and worked up to some bigger, harder-to-organize activities," Early explains. "We never reached the stage of selective strikes or work stoppages of any real duration, but we did engage in things that had harassment value and kept people involved. We reinforced the message that it wasn't just nine people off in a hotel room somewhere who were going to get a good contract, that the quality of the contract really depended on the degree of membership activity in the workplace."

The coordination of a contract campaign of this size was a major problem. "It's difficult in a unit of 40,000 people in 30 locals all around the state of New York, working in different departments, some people driving around in trucks with relatively minimal supervision all day, other people in effect chained to a computer screen in an operator services location, to plan activities that everybody can engage in," says Early. "We tried to maintain coordination by having frequent meetings of the mobilization coordinators from each local, and trying, where there were people from one or more locals in the same building, to get people to do things together."

Strike or Play the Inside Game?

As the contract deadline approached, the two sides were still far from agreement. Some of the union's leaders and staff were seriously interested in trying an inside strategy because of the difficulties of

striking a modern telephone company.

"The main difficulty is that you could be out for a long time before it has much of a disruptive impact on the actual telephone service," says Early. "That's because one-third of the workforce is non-bargaining unit, either non-union or management. The company also expands its use of sub-contractors, brings back management retirees in large numbers, and hires thousands of temps. So without even moving to the drastic step of hiring permanent replacements, there were literally thousands of people to keep the company going."

Much thought had therefore been given to organizing an in-plant strategy. The union had even discussed a list of specific tactics, including mass grievances, working to rule, zealous maintenance, rolling sick-outs, informational picketing, and lunch-time rallies. (See Chapter 12 on inside strategies for a full discussion of these sorts of activities.)

The contract campaign activities were meant to prepare workers to carry out the more advanced activities which make up an inside strategy.

"On our end," says Early, "we had spent most of our time coming up with plans for staying on the job and escalating the activity. Then quite close to the deadline, the bargaining committee majority vetoed that approach and decided that we shouldn't deviate from our traditional 'no contract, no work' stance. So in fact, we went into the strike without a lot of strike preparation. We had to improvise as we went along."

Besides a Telephone Workers Defense Fund and an "Adopt-A-Family" program to raise money, the improvised strike strategy involved four major tactics: 1) mobile picketing of scabs; 2) personalizing the enemy by having mobile pickets follow top board members and executives of the company; 3) getting phone company customers to support the strike by not paying their phone bills; 4) fighting management's requests for rate hikes at public utility commission hearings.

Follow the Trucks

"The improvised plan involved a lot of mass activity," Early recalls, "including some very big rallies in Boston and New York within the first couple of weeks of the strike: between 10,000 and 15,000 in Boston on August 15 and 5-6,000 in New York the same week." In the first few days of the strike, workers in New England sat in and lay down at company installations, preventing service trucks from leaving their garages. By the fifth day of the strike about 70 workers had been arrested across Massachusetts.

The most-used tactic was mobile picketing, so that management employees and contract labor trying to do struck work were subjected to as much harassment as possible out on the street. "We organized people to follow the trucks Teamster-style," Early explains, "rather than just walk around in a circle in front of a garage that after eight in the morning is going to be empty all day. The mobile picketing was probably the most effective thing that was done in the strike."

Cars of strikers followed company trucks when they left for work in the morning and picketed or blocked them when they tried to start working. In many cases little work got done as the scabs spent hours trying to lose the picketers. In Boston, IBEW Local 2222 set up a sophisticated system of mobile picketers with beepers and a dispatcher at union headquarters. Strikers also went after scabs brought in by professional strikebreaking firms, driving them out of several motels with raucous "garden parties" in the parking lots at six a.m.

The mobile picketing was aimed at some of the company's more profitable areas, such as the installation of business switchboards and telephone systems, or activities which provided the company with cash flow, such as the collection of money from coin boxes.

Targeting Executives

The mobile picketing also specifically targeted top board members and executives of the company. "We really went after the heads of New York and New England Telephone and board members of NYNEX," says Early. "We did a lot of picketing at people's homes, at their business clubs, at their country clubs, whenever they got honorary degrees or awards. We did not play by the old rules of the game."

Early believes that this kind of activity can play an important role. "It brings the strike home to key corporate decision makers who would prefer to be, and always have been, relatively insulated from the effects of any strike. We had pickets in Boston following the chief management negotiator for New England Tel home to the train station every night. And we had people outside his house following him to the train station in the morning. When the executives have to live with the strike the way the strikers do, over a period of

time it has to have an impact on their psychology.

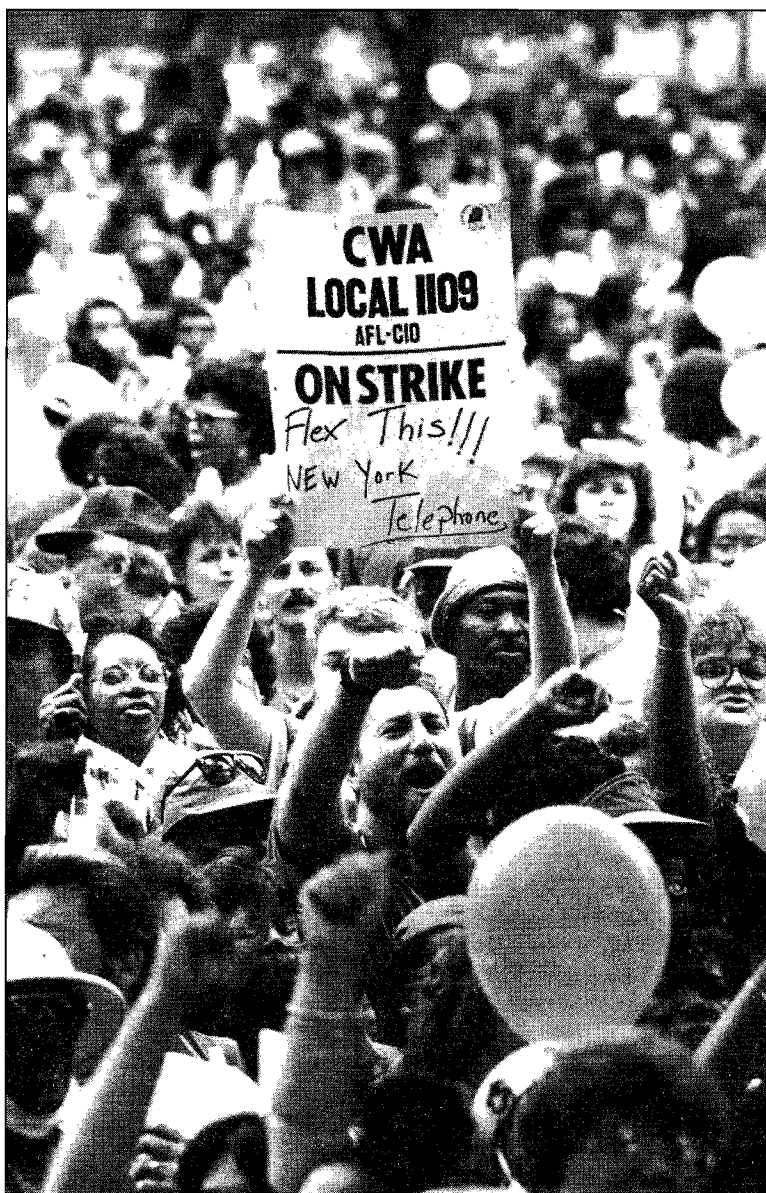
"We went after a board member who's the president of Mount Holyoke College, which is a women's college. We targeted her because she's this self-proclaimed 'dress-for-success-feminist.' One of the company's main bargaining demands, the lump-sum bonus in place of a wage increase, would have really hurt the lower paid, primarily female telephone workers involved in the strike.

"So we had a big demonstration out at Mount Holyoke and tried to rally the students and the faculty to harass her because she refused to meet with a delegation of strikers.

"The thing we didn't do, that would have involved a lot more advance planning, was to target particular board members, such as those with insurance industry ties, who might have been subject to economic pressure from customers or other institutions that they dealt with."

It is difficult to measure the impact of this personalized picketing. Though it had no immediate economic impact, it may have had a psychological effect on management, and it was good for the members' morale.

Of greater potential economic impact was the union's "Don't Pay Your Phone Bill" campaign. "We tried to get people to stretch out their phone bill payments for as long as possible," Early explains. "That had a lot of potential, but it was nowhere near systematic enough to make this an effective boycott. Boycotts are usually things that unions declare and then walk away from, and they have no impact. This one had more potential because just about everybody has a phone, and a lot of people are late paying their bills anyway, and customers have a lot of rights under the state utility commissions. If you make partial payments and file appeals, and hem and haw, and go through the right gyrations, you can go for quite a while without paying your full bill.



NYNEX strikers, 1199 hospital workers, and Eastern strikers marched together in an August 1989 demonstration.

Les Stone/Impact Visuals

"We made an effort to educate customers about how they could support the strike by sitting on their bills and slowing down their payments. We did a lot of leafleting. We got organizations that were sympathetic to us to pledge that they wouldn't pay their organizational bills, such as other unions and the Rainbow Coalition. We went to government bodies like the City Council in Boston, which after a series of hearings, recommended that the city not pay its phone bill until the strike was concluded. We also tried to get people to write in and demand a rebate for that portion of their bill that would normally go toward wages and benefits."

Perhaps the most important aspect of the "Don't Pay Your Phone Bill" campaign, says Early, is that "it was something you could take to anybody and everybody to get them to support the strike."

Fighting Rate Increases

More important in terms of economic impact on the phone company were the unions' efforts to stop state regulatory agencies from approving rate hikes. In the middle of the strike New York Telephone announced that it wanted a \$300 to \$400 million rate increase, which would have doubled residential phone bills over the next few years.

"We did a massive campaign against this," says Early. "We had a majority of the members of the New York state legislature sign a full-page ad that we took out in the *New York Times*, urging the Public Service Commission to reject this rate increase while the strike was going on."

"We circulated leaflets on the Long Island Railroad, Penn Station, Grand Central Station and major cities upstate," explains Jan Pierce. "We received hundreds of thousands of signatures against the rate hike. That represented a real threat to the company. When NYNEX saw their public image eroding, and when Wall Street analyzed the long-term impact that it would have on rate making, and therefore revenue, dividend, and profits, they started to move and say enough is enough."

"It was very popular," says Early. "People don't have the greatest love for the phone company to begin with, and they were trying to raise residential rates at the same time that they were trying to strip employees of their benefit coverage. In Massachusetts we lobbied against a bill that would have allowed them to charge for directory assistance for the first time. We got legislators to bottle that up for the duration."

"It all came together: our strike activity was disrupting political relationships in both the Massachusetts and New York legislatures and on the regulatory commissions that the companies depend on for getting what they want."

Settlement of the Strike

Finally, as the strike was entering its fourth month, William Ferguson, chairman of NYNEX, met directly with Morty Bahr, president of the CWA, and

on November 13 an agreement was reached and subsequently ratified. It beat back medical cost-shifting, lump sums and profit sharing, and retained cost-of-living increases and wage increases that would be folded into the base rate. Early believes that the company settled primarily because it was losing business to other phone companies and because its political relationships with legislators and regulators were being disrupted.

The campaign and strike were also part of a longer-term political struggle for a national health care program for everyone, regardless of what kind of job they have or whether they have a job. "We pressed the case for health care reform," Early explains, "which we defined as Canadian-style national health insurance. We did a lot of public education during the strike around the idea that cost-shifting was not the answer to the problem, that there was no solution to it at any individual bargaining table, that this was a societal problem, and a socially responsible company should be working with us for Canadian-style socializing of the cost of health coverage. Until this was done, there would continue to be these very disruptive, messy disputes. We probably raised the profile of that issue in terms of media coverage more than any other strike."

"Our resistance and the price that people paid for defending their own benefit coverage is part of the larger fight for universal health coverage for everybody. We really tried to project this as everybody's cause, rather than just a private dispute."

Longer Term Effects of the Campaign

In addition to preserving their wage and benefit package and raising the political issue of a national health program, the CWA-IBEW campaign also had some longer-term benefits for the union.

The CWA has remained active in the regulatory arena since the strike, continuing to battle the company before the public service commissions in alliance with consumer and community groups. Perhaps more important, the campaign helped to change the thinking and the activities of some local union leaders and activists.

"Certainly in the Boston-based IBEW Local 2222 things have changed," says Early. "They had a mass meeting every two weeks during the strike, 1,000 to 1,500 people came, there was a tremendous increase in membership participation. Since the strike they've had a women's conference, and they've continued to be involved in the Rainbow Coalition. They certainly have not reverted to a more business union mode of functioning which had been their mode for the last 20 years. That's largely a testament to the new leadership of the local."

"The activists in the local understand that you can't develop allies and then just disappear from them after the strike. They had a Rainbow Coalition dinner here in January 1990, and one of the labor awards went to the NYNEX strikers, and people from the IBEW local, paying for their own tickets, bought four

or five tables, a big, big group. It was almost the only white spot in an otherwise pretty Black assembly of about a thousand people. That local had never had anything to do with the Rainbow Coalition prior to having Jesse Jackson at their rally, and having Rainbow people on the City Council support them, and Rainbow activists go out and push the 'Don't Pay Your Phone Bill' campaign. It really opened people's eyes up as to who their friends were."

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Campaign

The CWA-IBEW 1989 contract campaign represented a tremendous step forward for the two unions. It was the first time that the telephone workers' unions had attempted to mobilize the members in such a fashion. Many members were enthusiastic about the campaign. Particularly popular, just to take one example, were the "color days" when union members all wore red t-shirts to show their solidarity.

However, some union members complained that some of the campaign activities, like everyone simultaneously tapping pencils on their desks for one minute, were only symbolic and not substantive, and therefore made them feel foolish. Some stewards and rank and file activists thought the unions should have organized pre-strike activities which would have done more economic damage to the company, such as overtime bans and slowdowns.

Obviously the biggest problem was the union's lack of preparation for a strike, and the fact that strike strategy had to be improvised. The unions' improvised strategy contained many good elements, but the length of the strike, almost four months, indicates that there was not adequate pressure on the company. See Appendix E for an evaluation of the campaign.

In dealing with a highly automated operation like the telephone company, it has always been difficult for a traditional strike to be effective. In British Columbia, telephone workers dealt with this problem by seizing and occupying company facilities. See Chapter 11 on Sitdown Strikes.

Teamsters Strike Grocery Chain

Perhaps the greatest danger in any strike, at least from the point of view of the rank and file, is that the employers and the union officials will negotiate an agreement over the heads—or behind the backs—of the members. The farther away and higher up the union officials are, the greater the danger.

The involvement of the union's members, even their control of the day to day activity of the union's strike committee, however admirable their creativity and energy, is no substitute for the ranks' democratic control of their union. This is one of the lessons from the defeat of the northern California grocery strike in the fall of 1988.

Steve MacDonald is a member of Teamster Local 490 in Vallejo, California and works for Lucky Supermarkets at the company's Vacaville distribution cen-

ter. There are about 160 drivers, another 40 casuals, and about 400 warehousemen working on three shifts. "We had a plan that was well thought out," says MacDonald, "and the rank and file could see it. We led them, and they went out and got the job done."

Lucky's had already forced the union to accept two-tier wages in previous contracts. Now the company wanted what it called "parity" with other grocery warehouses which paid \$2.00 an hour less.

"We haven't had a cost of living increase or a raise for four years," MacDonald says. "But one of the big things that actually fueled the rank and file was the company's intimidation over the last several years in the form of a work standards program, a speedup program in the warehouse. Many people, older folks especially, can't keep up with the standard, don't quite get suspended or fired, but harassed to the max, stressed out.

"People came together as a rank and file and united because deep down inside they knew that if they didn't make a stand somewhere, what's going to happen further on down the road?

"The company in previous contracts always prepared for a strike. They put all their bailed-up cardboard against the fence, turn all their tractors around so nobody knocks the windows out of them. They train their managers how to drive trucks. None of this happened before our contract expired, so we felt maybe they're going to have a decent offer. Then they offered us this contract with no raise, no cost of living. Our union officials signed a piece of paper recommending this agreement."

However, when the proposal was presented to the rank and file it was rejected by more than the two-thirds majority then required under the Teamster Constitution. "Then the company knew that the union leadership didn't control us," says MacDonald.

The overall control of the strike and negotiations was in the hands of the Northern California (Nor Cal) Grocery Committee, made up of Teamster business agents from several locals. However, the running of the strike on the local level was in the hands of the local strike committee.

"Somewhere in January or February of 1988," MacDonald explains, "the rank and file at our Lucky distribution center elected a strike committee, the drivers unit and also the warehouse unit. It's a standard practice months before to elect a strike committee.

"Our plan was centered around a consumer-oriented leaflet program in front of Lucky grocery stores. We wanted to send the paying customers elsewhere. In doing so the dollars that would be coming into our Lucky stores may be going into Lucky's competitor, which are also union workers, but taking the money out of our company specifically.

Teams of Twenty-four

"We had teams made up of 24 people, selected by zip code. We got the print-out from the union hall. We did it by zip code so our rank and filers could car-

pool together to the store that was assigned to them by the strike committee.

"There were two strike committee team captains, a captain and a co-captain. It was their job to coordinate the people on their list. We gave them the leaflets, the legal documents to protect them, and the instructions on how to leaflet properly and greet the public in a pleasant way, as very normal citizens.

"We had to project a positive, friendly Teamster handing a leaflet to a consumer, telling them a short story about why we are on strike. Our employer wants us to roll back our wages, they want to decrease benefits, they want co-payments on retiree benefits."

Before the strike began, the union rented office space and installed telephones. "This was a very modest strike center," says MacDonald. "But we needed a base that they could call in to 24 hours a day, to know that they had somebody there supporting their strike, answering their questions, getting them extra bodies or leaflets if they needed them on the picket line."

Truck drivers, warehouse workers and clerical workers all worked together out of the strike headquarters and on the picket line. "We turned the rank and file's best, whatever they did best for Lucky's," says MacDonald, "into the best for our strike committee. The secretaries that move the paperwork for Lucky's were the best people to be in the strike center to coordinate things. So that worked out great." The strike headquarters also produced two strike bulletins.

Targeting: Hit Them in the Cash Register

Based on what they had learned in previous strikes, the strike committee decided to target certain stores for picketing and leafleting. "In 1978 we tried to picket all of the Northern California Lucky stores," says MacDonald, "about 150 stores. We picketed 12 hours a day, seven days a week, just with picket signs. We didn't have the leaflet program at that time. We were not very successful in 1978, so in 1988, we decided to pick the highest volume stores. Some of these stores do in excess of \$500,000 a week in retail sales. You want to affect them in the cash register.

"We started out with 30 stores in our area. One week into that strike, I had sales figures, because the retail clerks inside the store are also union, and somehow or other I got figures. The first few days each of these stores was down \$20,000, \$30,000, and one store lost \$250,000 in one week.

"We had our leaflets translated into Vietnamese so that our pickets could leaflet a high volume store that was heavily Vietnamese. We also did the leaflets in Spanish and in Thai. We had them all translated to fit into whatever neighborhood we were in.

"We had some neighborhoods where shoppers were probably a fifty-fifty mix of white and Black families. Well, we had set up our teams by zip code, not by race. Sometimes we got a call from the team captains saying, 'Hey, we need a couple of Black rank and filers out here, because we need to get a connection out here with the races.' So that's what we did. We

shifted strategically to help the system out in the field. We didn't switch because Joe McGee wants to go picket with his buddy. That doesn't work. You've got to be committed to this and follow the rules that the strike committee has put together."

The Local 490 strike committee came up with a number of ways to get the public's attention both on the picket line and in the community.

Picketers wore white shirts with black letters saying 'Don't Shop Lucky's' and a circle with a slash through it. The circle and slash were fluorescent orange. Sometimes they also wore their company safe driving shirts. Each driver with five years of safe driving had received three bright red shirts that said 'Lucky Safe Driver' in bold white letters. "It's just like these Pittston coal miners wearing that camouflage," explains MacDonald. "You wear all red in front of a store, you paint a big picture out there. And it says, 'Lucky Safe Driver'—we are good workers. We're asking you to shop somewhere else."

The workers also turned a company letter into a union picket sign. "I took Lucky's letter to employees that they stuffed in our checks, dated August 25, 1988: 'Vacaville employees are 110 percent of standard.' They praise us all the time about our record profits, and our production, productivity.

"We blew the letter up to picket sign size. So when you get a consumer that is in disbelief that this company would take wages away—you guys must be lazy workers—we could produce a document that the company put out praising us.

"I also had bumper stickers printed up, 'Don't Shop Lucky's,' with the circle and the slash.

"The other tactic that I had, I took a picket sign myself and planted it in my front yard. It said, 'Teamsters On Strike, Lucky Stores, Northern California.' My idea was to have every Teamster, we're talking 600 just in the Vacaville/Dixon immediate area, to plant a picket sign in your front yard to let your neighbors know that you're on strike. They know you as a decent neighbor, you mow your lawn, you're friendly to their kids.

"If you plant a strike sign, just think how many people are going to look at that every day. Some people may be shy about making that statement. But if you can carry it in front of a Lucky store you should plant one on your lawn. Exposure, exposure, exposure." Unfortunately, says MacDonald, he did not have enough signs or enough time to get this lawn sign campaign organized.

As the strike went on, some tension developed between the Nor Cal Grocery Committee made up of the business agents and the strike committee elected by the rank and file. The first indication of the friction was over MacDonald's idea about an airplane.

"I had the idea to fly an airplane towing a banner that said, 'Don't Shop Lucky's.' I had to go against the wishes of my union officials to do this, and it was probably the first time that I've ever done that. But being elected to a strike committee, I felt the obligation to the rank and file.

"So we had them circle several of the stores. It

cost me \$500 for four hours. But I had to pay for that out of my own checkbook.

"And I got a lot of feedback that afternoon. The rank and file were elated. They were out there leafletting and they saw their union doing something. By putting a sign in the sky we gave them a positive feeling about what they were doing. We had also reached probably hundreds of thousands of people, and not just around the store.

Taking the Strike to the World Series

"In October of 1988 we had a World Series in Oakland, which was in the middle of our strike area. I called up my friend the pilot and asked him if it was legal for him to fly over the Oakland Coliseum. I picked up some leafleters and took 10,000 leaflets.

"I let the Oakland police know that we would be leafletting. It wasn't against the law, but we wanted to let them know what we would be doing ahead of time."

The strikers handed out leaflets wearing their "Don't Shop Lucky" t-shirts with the fluorescent orange circle and slash on them. "To my amazement, I would estimate that at least 20 percent of the people wouldn't take a leaflet, saying, 'I support you, I've already heard about it, I'm not shopping at Lucky stores. Good luck.'

"And we also had Teamsters that had season tickets; even though we had a strike going on, doggone it, we still had a World Series, right? They went inside with leaflets in backpacks. You take a handful and say, 'Take one and pass it on, please.' And it goes right around like dominoes."

Towards the middle of the first inning, the Oakland A's fans saw a small plane fly low over the stadium pulling behind it a banner with red, seven foot high letters: DON'T SHOP LUCKY'S. As it happened, the chairman of Lucky's was in his box at the game when the plane came over.

The leafletting and plane at the World Series increased the friction between the Nor Cal Grocery Committee and the strike committee. "I got a call from Casey Sawyer, my secretary-treasurer and Chairman of the Nor Cal Grocery Committee. He was irate about this airplane. He said it was the worst thing we could have done."

The Strike Is Sabotaged

"Our strike was sabotaged by the union officials," says MacDonald. Before meeting with the members, they told the media there was a settlement. "They hit

the radio and the television, and the shoppers were coming back and running over the lines. The shoppers would say, 'Hey, you guys aren't supposed to be here. We heard there's a settlement.' Our rank and filers hadn't even heard about it yet.

"The union officials not only hit the media, they went in groups to our teams and ran most of them off the union stores. They went around to all of the stores and intimidated the younger Teamsters saying, 'Hey, the '78 strike was 17 weeks long, you want to stay out here till Christmas?'

"They brought the top guns in. Chuck Mack, the Joint Council 7 president, who I've never seen at a ratification meeting before, came from Oakland to Fairfield. He came in there and pitched for the contract. In essence it was the same proposal we struck over, except they extended the contract a year," making it a four-year contract.

"And I honestly, as a strike committee member, had to stand up there and recommend the contract to the rank and file. Because I knew that after the union officials hit the media with 'strike settlement' that we couldn't win. I knew it

would probably take not only a week or two to regain the ground, but also the drive that the rank and file had was taken away." Under these pressures, the contract was ratified by the rank and file.

"So that meant that we went four years instead of three with no wage increase, no cost of living improvements, though there were some interior improvements."

Nevertheless, says MacDonald, "We did benefit from this strike.

"Our benefits were the younger Teamsters, they'd never been on strike before. And the rank and file came together in these teams. They were totally devoted to the particular store that they were assigned to. They saw the team effort worked. Just like the team effort works inside the warehouse to get the job done, it worked out on the street to shut down Lucky stores.

"I think the biggest gain is that they got the job done, even though they didn't get rewarded for it in the contract. So that casts disbelief in the union leadership. That's something we will have to work to correct in a democratic way."

By the way, says MacDonald, "Once we got back to work the rank and file found out who paid for the airplane.

"They petitioned the executive board of 490 to cough up for this, but they refused to do so. So the rank and file out of their own pockets paid me back the couple thousand dollars that I had put out."



Lessons of the Grocery Strike

The Lucky's strike experience shows a wealth of tactical ideas from the shirts and bumper stickers to the crew that leafleted the World Series while the plane carried their message overhead. Clearly the greatest strengths of the strike were the democratically elected strike committee and the involvement of the rank and file.

Nevertheless, the greatest lesson is that the rank and file must be able to control their leaders. Certainly no strike leader should be permitted to make a statement to the press selling a contract and giving the impression that a strike and boycott has ended before the membership has had an opportunity to discuss and vote on the contract.

Questions of strike strategy and tactics are inseparable from questions of union democracy. The cleverest tactics and most sensible strategy cannot overcome the problem of a conservative and bureaucratic union leadership. The problems which arose in the settlement of this strike can only be solved by fighting to democratize the union.

Strike Guidelines

Winning the Political Battle

• **The battle for the community's support begins long before the strike breaks out.**

Your union will be in the best position if it has a reputation for supporting the causes of the community. Does your union have a community relations committee? Have you been working with the homeowners who are fighting the toxic polluter—perhaps the company you work for? Has your union helped the Black or Latino community deal with its fight for integrated housing? Where was your union when the schoolteachers were on strike?

• **Don't let the company frame the issues.** The union must set the tone, if possible before the strike begins.

Think about how some strikes have been portrayed:

"Teachers' Strikes Hurting Thousands of Children."

"Transport Workers Strike Subway System, Buses—Bring Chaos to City."

"Milk Drivers' Strike Leaves Shelves Bare."

To counteract this management propaganda the union needs an alliance with the community and consumers. If the union's strike demands and strategy are formulated so as to speak to the needs of the people, it will go a long way towards neutralizing some elements of the community and winning allies among others.

For example, teachers unions frequently strike not only for higher wages, but also for more preparation time and smaller class sizes so they can do a better job of teaching. If the teachers union educates the parents about those issues, it can convince them that it is striking for the children—not against them.

If the subway workers and bus drivers make an alliance with the consumer group to demand not only higher salaries but also better service and no fare increase, then maybe the commuters will at least bear the disruption to their lives without becoming opponents of the strikers.

When the milk drivers strike, if they continue deliveries to hospitals and schools and daycare centers, they will have gone a long way in winning over the public.

Demands can be formulated defensively, modestly and/or in the public interest. Examples: "We want to keep our COLA so we won't be going backwards." "We want the same salary as social workers in the next county. We want a smaller caseload so we can spend more time with clients." "We demand that the chemical plant invest in engineering controls to reduce pollution both inside and outside the plant."

A Strike Checklist

It is important to think through every aspect of a strike beforehand. The following checklist is a general guide. The ideas here represent a best-of-all-possible worlds situation, with maximum rank and file input and democracy. You may have to adapt them to your existing union structures—or think about changing the structures.

• **A membership vote** on whether or not to strike.

• **A clear set of union objectives and conditions for returning to work**, understood by both the membership and the negotiators. Most of these things will be negotiable.

• **A democratically elected strike committee** which is broader than simply the union executive board or shop committee, with responsibility to organize the strike. In making nominations for this committee keep in mind the racial and sexual composition of the workforce, the various plants, departments, and shifts and try to make the committee as representative as possible. This committee will have to meet frequently, perhaps daily.

• **An elected negotiating committee** which either overlaps with the strike committee or maintains close communication between the two. Ideally, this committee should be elected specifically for the particular bargaining it is to do rather than made up automatically of certain officials.

• **Regular and frequent membership meetings.**

• **A strike fund committee** headed by an absolutely trusted member or officer. The committee will have responsibility for dispensing strike benefits to striking workers. It may also make loans or grants to workers facing eviction or repossession of their cars, and handle bail money.

• **A fundraising committee** to seek money from sources outside the local and International union. This committee will go to other unions, conduct plant gate collections, go to civic organizations and churches. It should also be headed by a highly trusted officer or member.

- **A strike headquarters** near the main strike location, with telephones. This is a place for the strike leaders to meet, for workers to drop by for information, for press conferences and meetings with the community. Another union or a community group may be able to provide a hall.

- **A picket captain** (or captains), operating under the general guidance of the strike committee, with the authority to organize the picket lines and direct squad leaders. The captain(s) will have to meet with squad leaders daily and perhaps hourly.

- **A picket schedule** with all locations and shifts covered and regular turns by all union members (except those exempted because they have other duties) and supporters.

- **A flying squad** made up of the union's most active and energetic members to deal with difficult situations. Such a squad can be mobilized in cars or vans to deal with scabs, to pursue trucks that cross the picket line, or simply to bring energy and life to a sagging picket line.

- **A set of simple rules for the picket line** dealing with such issues as: No drugs or drinking. What to do if the picket line is busted by the police.

- **A policy for dealing with scabs**, which may change as the situation develops.

- **A food committee** to deal with the feeding of pickets and/or strikers. The food committee will collect donations of food and distribute them either through a food bank or a communal kitchen.

- **An official spokesperson** to the media. The spokesperson may want to appear with a representative group of strikers. The union may want to issue frequent press releases and hold press conferences.

- **An outreach committee** or a speakers bureau. This committee can go to other unions, to churches, to civic organizations, and present the union's view. (It may work closely with the fundraising committee.)

- **A support committee** of spouses and/or supporters from other unions or the community. Sometimes family members or outside supporters can picket a company even if the courts have enjoined the union from doing so.

- **A first aid committee** (if there are confronta-

tions with scabs or the police). A volunteer doctor, perhaps from a physicians union, may be asked to head the committee.

- **A law firm** or attorneys to represent the union's members in the event of injunctions, fines, arrests or other problems. For example, the employer may put pressure on landlords not to rent the union a hall. It is essential that the lawyers be controlled by the strike committee and be kept subordinate to the strike committee.

- **A strike bulletin committee.** *Nothing* is worse during a strike than feeling that you are in the dark.

Running the Weekly Strike Meetings

Make them short and to the point, but also as interesting as possible:

- 1) A report from the strike committee on the progress of negotiations, giving any changes in the company or union position.

- 2) A report from the picket captain on the picket line, dispelling any rumors or misunderstandings. This may be a good opportunity to hand out the picket duties for the week.

- 3) The support committee may want to present guests and give them a chance to offer their solidarity greeting to the crowd.

- 4) The members should always have an opportunity to ask questions and make suggestions, and the right to disagree with the conduct of the strike. It is important to have a democratic discussion both so that the members can determine policy and so that the leaders can judge the morale of the members.

- 5) There should be entertainment, perhaps musicians with labor songs.

Fighting Fear and Boredom with Action

When a strike begins there is frequently a tremendous elation and excitement. Many workers feel powerful: they are sticking it to the company. Other workers feel free from the day to day routine of the job. There is a flurry of activity as the various committees are formed and people throw themselves into picketing, fundraising and organizing community support.

However, after the first several days or weeks there is frequently another mood swing: fear and worry. How will we make the house payment? How will I pay for the kids' allergy shots without insurance?

In addition to fear and worry are routine and boredom. The routine of picket duty and working in the food pantry can be as stifling after a while as the routine of work. The boredom of walking around in circles seems little better than the boredom of sitting around the house or hanging out in the bar.

In order to deal with these morale issues the union must develop a program of activity for all the strikers. The activities are not make-work, however; they are essential to winning the strike in this day and age when the old "picket-the-fence let-the-officials handle-it" approach has been proven a failure.

A Picket Line Checklist

- Picket signs.
- Bullhorn or public address system.
- Leaflets to give to the public explaining the strike.
- Stickers or buttons with your message to hand out to the public—ask them to wear them or put them up in their own workplaces.
- A handout with union chants and songs.
- A legal rights handout explaining the picketers' rights, and what to do and who to call if arrested.
- The picket schedule for the captains and squad leaders, with a log book to keep track of those who have performed their picket duty.

- Delegations can go to other unions and community groups and churches. Delegations can visit the media to explain the union's viewpoint and ask for better coverage. Delegations can speak to politicians. Delegations can try to get better treatment from the welfare, food stamp, or other public agencies.

- Social events can be difficult because of the serious nature of the conflict or simply because people do not have much money. It may be possible, however, to get the support committee to sponsor a picnic or a dinner in a local church. Some unions sponsor softball or football games for families. Dances can raise money. Social events get people together and lift their spirits.

- Rallies and demonstrations at the worksite, at company headquarters, at the homes of company board members or officers, at the offices of politicians are a good way to put pressure on. They can be rowdy demonstrations with signs or they can be candlelight vigils.

- Marches and caravans can involve the strikers and their supporters: A large caravan by public employees to the state capital. A tour of all the struck plants. A march through the downtown business district to the corporate headquarters. A caravan in cars, on bicycles, on roller skates, on skateboards—whatever will mobilize the members and catch public attention and sympathy.

- A hunger strike may be an appropriate form of protest among some groups of workers. Mexican and Chicano workers have a tradition of hunger strikes as a way of winning public sympathy. In Mexico hunger strikers typically occupy the public square where they are attended to by other striking workers and by a doctor or nurse. United Farm Workers leaders have used this tactic. (Before beginning a hunger strike check with someone who has experience in organizing them, and get a physician to help.)

Taking Care of Scabs

- Publicity by the union about the strike and its goals is essential. This may win sympathy from some potential strikebreakers. Such publicity also alerts those who want to avoid trouble.

- Friends of the union should sign up for work as scabs in order to get information about when and

where scabs are being recruited, when they are coming to work, who the scabs are, and other information.

- Greeting parties can be organized if there is information that scabs are coming into town on public buses, trains, or planes. If they are coming in by car it is possible to get the license, make, model and color and visit them later. Scabs can be talked to and asked to leave; if this doesn't work perhaps they can be convinced that leaving is in their best interests.³

- If scabs are being kept in motels or trailer parks they can be visited at night. If nothing else night visits may make it difficult for the scabs to get adequate rest. Such visits are potentially dangerous and should be carefully thought out.

- Mass picket lines can make it impossible for scabs to get to work, or can make them afraid to try.

- In some situations, such as rural areas and small towns, the union may want to offer scabs the money to go back where they came from. Some unions have even hired scabs to do picketing.

- If the scabs are not English speakers, try to reach them in their own language. Frequently employers take advantage of foreigners who do not speak English or know the laws and customs of the country, and are not familiar with the issues involved.

- If the scabs are of a different race, culture, or language it is important that the pickets do not engage in racist name-calling. The issue is not that the scab is of another race or ethnic group, but that he or she is a scab, period.

Action Questions

1. What is the economic situation of your industry? Of your company? Of your plant? How much will a strike at this time hurt? How financially prepared are your members?

2. What is the essential goal of your contract negotiations, the thing that will make the difference between defeat and victory?

3. Is a strike your best tactic for reaching this goal? Would an in-plant strategy be more appropriate?

4. How do the members feel about the issue? Does the issue affect a small group, most people or everybody? Will it ultimately have an impact on everybody? How can you explain the issue in such a way that members will want to strike for it?

5. Who would you have to put pressure on to win your goal? Local management? The head of the company? The head of the parent corporation? An outside financial institution like a bank?

6. Is it necessary to strike every workplace at once? Would you be better off with a rolling strike or a part-time strike? Or a selective strike (only some departments or workplaces)?

7. What was the last strike your workplace or local was involved in? What went right? What went wrong? What would you do differently? Do the members view it as a defeat or a victory?

8. Who will do the planning for the strike? What is the role of the rank and file?

9. Is the method for taking a strike vote a good

What Strike Supporters Can Do

- Come out and help walk the picket lines. Or drop by the picket lines with coffee and doughnuts.

- Pledge a weekly contribution.

- Adopt a family. Get a church, civic club, union, or other organization to adopt one of the strikers and his or her family for the duration of the strike.

- Lobby the company, agency, or elected officials. Supporters can take delegations to the company or the agency urging a fair settlement, and write letters doing the same.

one? How could it be made better?

10. How does your union lead a strike? Who is in charge? Is it a good system? Do you have an elected strike committee? If so, what is its relationship to the executive board and negotiating committee?

11. What is the current system for setting up picket captains and squads in your union? Is it a good one? Can you think of other methods?

12. In the event of a strike, who are your allies? Make a list of those you can count on to help with food, money, picketing, legal assistance, publicity. Make another list of those who could be asked to help and might do so.

13. What would your union and membership do if threatened with an injunction? Have you discussed the financial and legal consequences for the local? Have you discussed civil disobedience?

14. Does your strike require some other sort of activity as well, such as a caravan or march? Or a hunger strike?

15. How do you plan to deal with scabs? Will you greet them? Will you attempt to keep them out?

16. Make a timeline for a strike, beginning with the contract campaign and laying out scenarios for strikes of varying lengths from one week to three months. What would you have to do each week?

17. What are your financial preparations? The local's resources? The International's? Other support such as the local AFL-CIO? What about the community? Do you have a fundraising committee?

18. Do you have an outreach committee to the community? Make a list of organizations to be visited: unions, churches, community groups, ethnic associations, women's groups, civil rights organizations.

Notes

1. This box was drawn from David Twedell, "A Part-Time Strike Helps Members Hold Out Longer," *Labor Notes*, April 1986.
2. "Why A Victory At NYNEX? An Interview with CWA Vice President Jan Pierce," *Economic Notes*, January-February 1990, Vol. 58, Nos. 1-2, p. 3. All quotes from Pierce are from this interview.

3. Legal Note: Intimidating anyone at any time is illegal under the criminal laws of every state. Violence, of course, is always punishable by the courts, whether or not there is a labor dispute. Less clear are incidents which present no specific threat, but might still be intimidating.

For instance, mass picketing which denies access to the employer has been held unprotected, even if there is no actual violence. *W T Rawleigh Co v NLRB*, 190 F2d 832, 28 LRRM 2324 (CA7, 1951). Threats may be found implicit in following nonstrikers to their homes. *Longshoremen's Local 6 (Sunset Line & Twine Co)*, 79 NLRB 1487, 23 LRRM 1001 (1948). But all cases are fact-specific, and the company has the burden of proof that any individual did anything.

The company may also have problems proving that the union is responsible. There are many court cases on the subject of whether the union is responsible for the acts of individuals and officers.

10. Wildcat Strikes

A wildcat strike is one which happens without official union authorization, whether initiated by rank and filers or by officials. While they may seem to be "spontaneous," they have almost always been preceded by some preparation and perhaps even detailed planning.

Most union members will participate in few or no wildcat strikes during the course of their working lives. But the wildcat—or threat thereof—can be a serious tool when used well. A bungled wildcat, on the other hand, can result in firings and weaken the union for some time to come. Even if using a wildcat strike against management is the furthest thing from their current minds, union officials and rank and file activists should know how to prepare for them, plan them, and end them successfully.

Why Wildcats?

Among the most common reasons for wildcat strikes are:

- A death or serious injury on the job. These wildcats often don't even begin as strikes, but as reactions of shock and horror, or as interruptions of work to rush emergency assistance to a worker.

- The company fires a steward, or simply a union member—and everybody walks off the job to get the fired worker's job back. From the 1930s to the 1960s this was the rule in many union workplaces, and it still is in some. In a sense this kind of strike was prepared for by tradition; members knew from experience that this was what was done. The signal would be given by a union officer, steward, or perhaps a senior rank and filer.

- A safety condition arises, such as a chemical leak. Many unions now have contract clauses giving them the right to refuse to work in the case of imminent danger, in effect legalizing an action which

used to require a wildcat.

- "The straw that breaks the camel's back." That is, a minor incident occurs, perhaps a shortage of gloves, which is a longstanding grievance. Sometimes the workers have met and agreed that "the next time this happens, we're walking."

- Paychecks are late or bounce, or the boss has chiseled on pay. In the construction industry such walkouts may be accompanied by a return to the construction site to "un-do" the carpentry or plumbing that was not paid for. Again, this kind of walkout is the result of education through tradition.

- Going out early. In some industries it is traditional to go out several hours or even a whole day before the official strike deadline. Usually management does little about such strikes.

- Staying out late. Sometimes when a union signs a contract which rank and file workers consider a bad settlement they will stay out to try to force the union back to the table.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Wildcats

Most wildcat strikes are short, usually lasting just a few hours or at most a few days. In some cases the wildcat forces the company and the union to attend to the problem and the workers return to work with little or no discipline. Management is prepared to overlook the matter in exchange for getting production going again. In other cases, of course, the strike is simply smashed. The employer fires the strikers and the union is unable or unwilling to defend them. Success or failure depends on how well the organizers are able to play the advantages of a wildcat and maneuver around its disadvantages.

- The element of surprise. Management is unprepared, management employees have not been trained to do the jobs, replacement workers are not on hand, there are no extra security forces. The worksite has not been locked up.

- **Timing.** A wildcat can happen exactly when it needs to happen. Management's peak need for the workforce may not coincide with contract expiration. A heat walkout happens when it's hot, not after a grievance has gone through the procedure. A wildcat called at the peak of the season in an industry such as canning or frozen food can be devastating.

- **The issue of being unofficial.** Because the union is not sanctioning the strike, there are no strike benefits. The union hall may be closed to the wildcaters. The union will not ask other locals to honor picket lines. In fact, frequently International or local officials will attempt to break the strike. However, since the strike is unofficial, the rank and file are not bound by the controls and restrictions of the International or local union either.

In some cases the union will sanction a wildcat and make it an official strike. The danger here is that once officials take the strike out of the hands of the real strike leaders, they may sell it out.

- **The issue of breaking the contract's "no strike" clause.** The employer may seek an injunction and a judge may order the workers to return to work under pain of arrest and imprisonment. The union officials and/or the strikers may become liable for sizable fines for damage done the employer (see the box).

- **The rank and file character of a wildcat strike.** All of the wildcat strike's many disadvantages may be outweighed by its greatest advantage: namely, that it is happening precisely because of the rank and file's willingness to fight right then and there. This gives it energy which many officially sanctioned strikes—called from above after a news blackout on negotiations—do not have.

The following examples show how some wildcat strikes have been organized and won.

Telephone Workers Defend a Fired Member

Mary Baird is a services technician for Ohio Bell. During the late 1970s and early 1980s she was involved in several wildcat strikes.

"I helped lead a really neat little wildcat strike when I was a steward in my first outside plant garage. It was in pay phones in 1983," says Baird. On a Monday, a worker in the pay phone department named Ron Szydlowski was suspended for allegedly stealing coins. As Baird later wrote in the local union newsletter, "Ron had been apprehended by the Ohio Bell Gestapo (security forces), sentenced to an indefinite suspension, and flatly accused of theft."¹

"It was unfair, a set-up, and they really couldn't prove it," says Baird. "But they were taking his company pass which pretty well meant that they were considering him fired."

By Friday the situation had become intolerable to the employees in the garage, and they met to decide what to do about it. "People were teed off and they said, 'Let's walk.' I said, 'I think that's a good idea.

We've got to take a vote and it's got to be unanimous.'" All of the workers voted to walk out—except the other union steward.

"He said he couldn't do it because he was a steward," Mary remembers. "I said, 'What do you mean you can't do it because you're a steward? You call them up and tell them you resign.' I knew the local president would be behind us."

That meeting was on Friday. On Monday morning, Mary Baird and the other workers showed up at their yard with leaflets and picket signs protesting the unfair firing. Coin collectors, clerks, sales and service reps all honored the picket line and stayed out of the building.

"AT&T had their main test board upstairs in our building, and we threw up a picket line right before lunch. It was AT&T Special Services, which was a main hub for something that affected their national long distance circuit. The workers there stayed out, and pretty soon people all over the country were calling because this one office had stayed out. The guy got his job back that afternoon.

"In that case, where we were successful, I knew the local officers would back us. If the local leadership had come over there and intimidated us, it probably would have broken it up."

In thinking about her experiences in several wildcat strikes, Baird says, "A wildcat is a very grassroots type of action. You just have to have a feel for whether or not these people are going to stick together. Can you convince them to stick together? Is the issue important enough? Can you say to the people that are with you, this could happen to you?"

"The wildcats that I've experienced usually happen around something happening to one worker, and the other people see clearly that the person is being dumped on by management. This may be because of the way it is described to them by someone who's a leader, like a steward."

Some things to note about this wildcat:

First, Baird, as union steward, could "feel" that the group would stick together.

Second, the workers thoroughly discussed the action they were going to take and voted on it. (The fact that they went home over the weekend and returned the next Monday morning to picket is extremely unusual for a wildcat.)

Third, the members felt that they would have the support of their local officials. They did not have to worry about the local union trying to crush their strike.

Fourth, the workers knew that they worked in a strategically important location.

Wildcat Strike Among Truck Drivers

This is where the author of this book gets to tell one of his own stories.

In the summer of 1976, while working as a truck driver in Chicago, I was involved in a wildcat strike at the Schneider trucking company in Green Bay, Wis-

Legal Considerations in Wildcat Strikes

A wildcat strike is a strike conducted without official union authorization. If a strike has authorization by local but not International officials, and it is the International which has the authority to sanction, that might also be called a wildcat.

Peaceful strikes are legal and protected. But wildcats are considered a special case. They are denounced by practically all authorities. Judges reason that unions are set up as vehicles of democratic worker action, that employers are entitled to rely on the authority of union officials to speak for their members, and that orderly labor relations are disrupted if small nonrepresentative groups can effectively negotiate with the employer.

These are legitimate concerns for workers, and wildcatters are ordinarily aware of the concerns and the risks they take. But these concerns are sometimes overridden by a problem which requires immediate action, or the problem of union leadership which is unrepresentative, docile, or corrupt.

There are two legal weapons employers use to fight wildcats. They are the law and the contract.

Protection Removed

If there is not a contract in effect (for instance, when the union is negotiating for a new contract), federal law in the form of the National Labor Relations Act applies. Wildcatting is not illegal under the law. Participants cannot be jailed, and the union cannot be fined. Rather, the law simply removes the ordinary legal protection against discharge, leaving the employer free to pick and choose wildcat participants for discipline.²

There are a few situations where federal law will protect even wildcatters. If the union is bargaining for a new contract and a group goes out without authorization but generally in support of the union's goals, the strike is protected.³ Employees who quit work because of dangerously unsafe working conditions are also protected.⁴ And informational picketing, which neither calls for nor causes a strike or boycott, is protected.

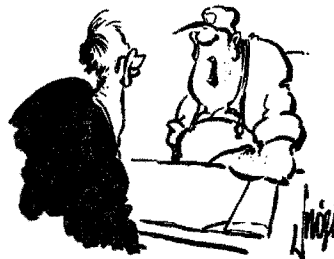
A contract provides a much more potent weapon than the law for the employer. Contracts ordinarily contain no-strike clauses. A few don't, such as those negotiated by the United Mine Workers; but in those cases the court simply reads a no-strike clause into the contract.⁵ In either case, the court will note the agreement in the contract not to strike; strikers have broken the agreement, so the employer has every reason to fire them.

The employer cannot discriminate on the basis of prior protected activity, such as holding of union office, in choosing wildcatting employees for discipline. Unless the contract itself imposes a greater obligation on union officials, an official has no affirmative obligation to tell members to go back to work.⁶

Some union contracts, such as the Teamster national agreements, do impose a duty on the union to actually end strikes in breach of contract. A union official considering instigating or participating in a strike in breach of contract might also consider resigning his or her union position first. This would protect the official and the union from extra liability due to the strike. Of course, any

such resignation must be in good faith, without an intention of returning to office at the end of the strike.

An unprotected strike in breach of contract may become protected if the employer settles the strike with a promise of no reprisals.⁷ And a



"This is not an illegal strike. We're having a 72-hour lunch break."

strike in breach of contract is protected if it is in response to a serious company unfair labor practice. But the definition of "serious" is unclear. It is apparently a company challenge to the union as a whole, rather than to the concerted activities of an individual or smaller group.⁸

Injunctions

The contract also gives the employer the legal basis for an injunction. The courts reason that since the contract has a grievance procedure, the strike should be enjoined while the procedure goes forward.⁹ If the strike is over a nongrievable issue, say because of problems within the union or a sympathy strike, it cannot be enjoined.¹⁰ A striker who is served with an injunction and continues in defiance of the court can be fined or jailed.

A contract also lets the company sue the union for damages. To win, unless the contract itself says something different, the company has to show that the union actually participated in or instigated the strike. It is not enough to show the union failed to use all reasonable means to end the strike.¹¹ Individual peaceful strikers cannot be sued for damages, regardless of what they did.¹²

If a wildcat strike is accompanied by violence, all bets are off. The company can fire, enjoin, and sue for damages responsible individuals or a responsible union.

The bottom line is that while wildcat strikes in breach of contract are not illegal, strikers are not legally protected from firing, unless the employer has acted outrageously beyond the usual level of outrageousness. Sometimes conditions are such that workers have to risk it anyway. If they do and in the end the company settles on terms favorable to the workers, they can come back to work with their jobs protected and whatever other gains they are able to negotiate.

consin. The national organizer of Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), of which I was a member, called me on a Friday night and told me that a group of union stewards in Green Bay was planning a wildcat and wanted some help from TDU. He asked if I could go up and give them a hand.

That night I drove to Green Bay, taking along a friend for company and, frankly, for protection. On Saturday morning I met a group of half a dozen stewards from various cities and a few other workers, mostly from Green Bay. They were meeting to decide whether or not to strike and they asked me what they should do. As an outsider, I was not about to tell them what to do. Instead I asked them to explain the issues and the forces involved.

It seemed that Schneider, a national trucking company specializing in hauling what are called "special commodities" (such as agricultural products), had decided to change the way it paid its truck drivers. Instead of paying "miles and hours" (that is, by the mile while driving and by the hour while loading or unloading the truck), Schneider wanted to pay a set percentage of the tariff on the freight. The drivers objected that this could mean a 25 percent pay cut. They had taken the issue to the union, but the union would not stop the change. So they were planning to strike beginning Sunday night, which was when most of the road drivers pulled out with their loads.

I asked the drivers a number of questions intended to help them clarify the situation in their own minds. I wanted to hold up a mirror so they could see themselves in it and see if they were in shape to strike.

First, where were the key barns (trucking terminals) in what states and cities? Second, how many workers worked in these different locations? Third, which barns could be counted on to strike? Fourth, would it be possible for the company to bypass the struck terminals?

The drivers explained that the company had about 1,000 drivers and that Green Bay, the company headquarters with about 350 drivers, was the key barn in the system. They expected that most other barns would strike, though there was a barn in Iowa which probably would not. The key, they said, was Green Bay, which set the tone for the rest of the system.

I then asked whether the workers in Green Bay were divided in any way. The drivers said that the Green Bay group was pretty together, but there was somewhat of a division between the top end of the seniority list and the bottom. Were both of these groups represented here? I asked. No, they said, not well represented. Most of the drivers involved in planning the wildcat were younger, lower seniority workers. Who, I asked, were the key top seniority people? The key man was a fellow who went by the name of Hop-Along Cassidy. They believed he would be with them, but were not sure.

After some discussion the drivers agreed to strike. I suggested that we write a leaflet explaining the issues to the Schneider drivers and others in Teamster Local 75. I asked the men what the key points would be, got my portable typewriter out of the

car, and wrote up what they had said. They read it, made some changes and approved it. We then took it to a print shop and printed several hundred copies, but held up distributing it until we talked to Hop-Along.

Hop-Along Blesses the Strike

A few of the stewards were designated to go to the barn and talk to the drivers coming in off the road and stopping at the office to get their paychecks. In this way word of the strike was spread among the drivers. Then I went with a man called John F. (because of his hard-to-pronounce last name) to a local tavern where many Schneider drivers stopped when they came in off the road, and where, he said, Hop-Along was sure to drop in.

We were there for a couple of hours when an older driver, a heavy-set fellow wearing a white cowboy hat, came in. John F. approached him and asked if he had heard the talk about the strike. Yes, said Hop-Along, he had. "What do you think?" said John. "I think," said Hop-Along, "that about Tuesday all those trailers sitting out there in that sun filled with all that cheese are going to start to smell like shit." And so he gave his approval to the wildcat, insuring the support of the high seniority drivers.

John F. got on the phone and started calling around the country to stewards in other Schneider barns. After each call he would look up and smile and say something like, "South Bend is down." All of the other barns agreed to strike Sunday night except for the one barn in Iowa. On Sunday night none of the trailers was pulled out of the Schneider barn, and on Monday morning we put up a picket line in front. The weather was warm, and the picket line had the air of a picnic. Many but by no means all of the drivers were on the line. Some brought their wives and children down. They sat in folding chairs in front of the cyclone fence drinking soda pop.

The union officials came to the picket line and told the strikers to come down to the hall for a meeting that afternoon. My friend and I went along to the meeting, which was crowded with well over 100 Schneider drivers. The first thing the union president did was demand that the "Communist agitators from Chicago" be put out of the meeting. I was pleased when somebody shouted, "These two guys have done more for us in two days than you have in two years." The rest of the crowd cheered and whistled in approval. Then the union president said he couldn't do anything about the Schneider pay problems and left.

The meeting went on among the Schneider drivers, but without much sense of direction. I asked if I could speak and was allowed to do so. I explained that while the strike was effective at the moment, the company would probably seek an injunction to end the picketing and then try to move trucks. I suggested that before that happened, the Schneider drivers should prepare to spread the strike to other companies in the area in order to put more pressure on management. After the meeting I talked to the drivers

about the dangers of an injunction and the need to mobilize more support, but they didn't take it seriously. This was all new to them and they believed that the company would see the light.

The next day my friend and I met again with the stewards. They told us that they appreciated our help, but that they felt our presence was an obstacle to working something out with the local union. As long as we were in town the union president was going to blame the strike on "Communist agitators from Chicago." We left that afternoon, though I continued to talk with some of the strike leaders over the next couple of days.

The company went to court and got an injunction against the strike. The union officials and some Schneider employees met with management and an agreement was reached that the old pay system would be used and that no one would be disciplined. The wildcat was successful.

The battle over pay continued at Schneider over the next few years, and there were other wildcat strikes. Eventually the company succeeded in changing the pay system. Later a TDU chapter was begun in Green Bay and some TDU members were elected to the local executive board.

There are several lessons to be learned from this strike. First, the workers must feel that the issues involved are serious enough to warrant a wildcat strike. Second, it is necessary to know the key locations and the support that exists in each. Third, it is necessary to include all the significant groups, in this case the top and bottom of the seniority list.

School Bus Drivers Strike Boston

If any one local union is a master of the wildcat strike, it must be USWA Local 8751, the union of the Boston school bus drivers. They wildcatted four times in three years and won every time. In the process they even got the school children's parents on their side.

"On October 9, 1980," remembers former steward Gene Bruskin about the last of these strikes, "we went on a 28-day wildcat strike against ARA Corporation. The first day they fired 19 leaders of the union who had signed their names to a leaflet. They permanently replaced 150 of us. They put six people in federal prison for a month. They brought in 100 paramilitary police, strikebreaking police that marched like Nazi storm troopers into the yard every morning and rode the school buses. They tried to get scabs to take the buses out. They spent two million dollars. They fought us for a month—and we won."

To read about these four wildcats, which were, respectively, over the firing of an activist, to get a union certification election, to get a first contract, and to solve grievances, readers are encouraged to see "The History of the Boston School Bus Drivers," by Gene Bruskin (see Appendix E). Here we will include only the story of how, in their second wildcat, the drivers successfully defied a court injunction.

In the fall of 1977 Boston was experiencing a citywide crisis over the issue of busing for school in-

tegration. The buses were frequently attacked by racist mobs throwing rocks and the whole city was tense. The bus drivers had signed cards to join the Steelworkers union and were impatiently waiting for the State Labor Commission to set an election. Hearings dragged on for weeks. Finally, on December 8 the bus drivers announced their plans to strike in two days. They put 10,000 leaflets in the hands of students riding their buses, explaining to them and the parents that the companies' disregard of safety had forced them into this situation.

At about 10 o'clock the next day, the drivers' leaders were summoned to the courthouse. The companies and the city had gone to court to seek an injunction against the strike. "So down at the courthouse," remembers Bruskin, "the city and the companies had ten lawyers. We still weren't union members yet, so representing us officially was this young radical guy we hired. There was the city, the companies, the judge, all the members of the School Committee, Mayor White had all his people down there, then there were a couple from the governor's office. And there was this group of scraggly bus drivers, and our scraggly radical lawyer with a long beard."

The city and the bus companies argued that the strike would do irreparable harm to the companies' profits and disrupt the education of the children. The court ordered the drivers not to strike, and the Steelworkers International said they would not support the strike for fear of being sued.

"So we had to have an emergency meeting," Bruskin remembers. "Everybody came to the picket line at about 4:30 in the morning to try to figure out what to do. They said they were going to put us in jail if we went on strike. So we did."

"It was zero degrees for the next three days. People were on the line; we met every night. It was front page news."

Cited for Contempt

"They served 55 people with contempt citations ordering them to appear in court," Bruskin continues. "On Friday morning, which was our third morning on the line, we appeared in court. Everybody was there, every news media from miles around, all the politicians, and the judge started calling people up—and I was the first one."

"I was called to the stand and questioned by an attorney to ascertain that I had been on the picket line. Then the judge said, 'The court is ordering you back to work. Are you going to go back to work?' I said, 'I'm not going to go.' The judge pointed to one of the court officers, and about 10 marshals rushed me, surrounded me and hauled me out. We had about 55 drivers in the room and they all jumped to their feet and started chanting, 'If you jail one, you jail us all.'"

"The whole thing was absolute pandemonium, cameras were flashing, people were screaming and yelling and chanting and the judge was banging his gavel. Meanwhile the drivers were quietly circulating a list to find out who could go to jail, because a lot of



Mark Hoffman

Boston school bus drivers.

people had outstanding warrants for traffic tickets, or some mothers were single mothers and they had nobody to take care of their kids. A lot of people couldn't do it, but we took the position that we were all going to do it.

"Well, the second person he called was a white woman named Connie Cushing. She was Irish working class all the way, four children in the schools. Went through the same routine and they ordered her back to work. She said she wouldn't do it. They ran up and took her off. Well, this was it. The judge totally flipped out. It was one thing for me, he's a single guy, he's a strike leader. This woman was clearly working class Irish Boston.

"We had taken the position that the law only had power if you gave it to the judge, and if you defied him, he had no moral authority whatsoever. The judge was in shock, because nobody ever defied him. He called an immediate recess, and basically we negotiated all night with our lawyer, and finally agreed to an election within ten days. We had to stay in jail, but we were let out of jail the next day.

"The election took place ten days later, and we won by 90 percent."

Conclusions

Because wildcat strikes so often break out in response to some incident, whether it is a worker in-

jured on the job or a bounced paycheck, it is difficult to plan for them. Obviously, a rank and file which is already well organized on the shop floor will be best able to deal with a wildcat strike. Following are a few points in addition to those made in the stories above.

- Rank and filers should think long and hard before pulling a wildcat their union leadership will oppose. Full solidarity, excellent timing, and the ability to hurt management quickly will be necessary to pull off such a strike without firings.

- The stewards or other union activists must have a feel for the situation. Is the issue one which will unite almost all or at least a sizable majority of the workers in the affected department or plant? Can the strike be spread quickly to everyone you want involved, whether that is the department, the plant, or the whole company?

- If the strike is going to be spread to other workplaces, get in touch with the workers at other sites *beforehand* to insure a sympathetic welcome for your pickets.

- The leaders of the wildcat, especially if they are stewards or other officials, may need to conceal their role as organizers. When committeemen at the General Motors Fleetwood plant organized a walkout in 1976, they circulated down the lines with a small card concealed in the palm of their hands. It read simply "7." At 7 p.m. the plant walked.

Or, as in the Ohio Bell case, stewards may want to resign at the appropriate moment, to avoid being

held legally responsible. The proper line for strikers to take, at least in the initial stages, is often "we have no leaders here."

- The leaders of any strike, official or wildcat, should understand the possibility of an injunction, arrest and jail. They should discuss with the rank and file in advance of an injunction, if possible, what their response will be.

- One of the great problems of wildcat strikes is that though the rank and file leads the strike, the union leadership usually negotiates the return to work. How is it possible to insure that the union leadership will not sell out the wildcat?

One answer is to get a working member into the meeting with management, perhaps the steward. That person can represent the views of the strikers, and can report back to them if a deal is being done.

- *The all-important demand of a wildcat strike is amnesty.* That means that management does not include anything in the employees' records and withdraws any police charges. Individual supervisors must also withdraw charges such as assault or battery. In the end you may have to negotiate and accept some discipline.

- Remember that in all likelihood the strike is going to be short, a few hours or a couple of days. Even while you are trying to spread the strike to the rest of the department or the rest of the plant, you must be figuring out how to end it in such a way as to save everyone's jobs and win your demand.

If you go back to work quickly, with even a small victory, you will be stronger than you were before the strike began. You will, if necessary, be able to carry out a wildcat strike again.

Action Questions

Wildcat strikes are by definition unofficial and are sometimes considered illegal. Be very discreet in discussing these matters. You may not want to have a formal discussion involving any union officers or stewards. Or you may want to forget that you had one.

1. Is there a history of wildcat strikes where you work? If so, how have they happened in the past? In what department did they begin? What group of workers has usually taken the lead?

2. What has management done in the past? What has the union leadership done in the past?

3. Is there an area in your workplace where there have been flare-ups recently and where a wildcat strike might break out? Would that be a good or bad area for such a thing to happen? Is the timing good,

e.g., is there an order that needs to go out immediately or some other pressure on management to end a strike quickly?

4. Should something be done to help the people who might organize a wildcat in that department?

5. How would word of a wildcat be spread to other departments? Who could spread the word most quickly?

6. Would workers in other departments support the wildcat? Would they strike themselves? What can be done to win them over to support the wildcatters? Should there be some quiet talk in the shop to let them know about the problems?

7. What are the key areas, transport, communication, machines that should be shut down to make the strike effective? Who will shut those things down? What things have to be kept running and protected to make sure that no unnecessary damage is done? Who will insure that they keep running?

8. If a wildcat strike were called, would the stewards support it? The union officers? Would the leaders offer overt support? Covert support? Look the other way? Try to help end it victoriously? Try to smash it? What can be done to improve the union officials' position?

Notes

1. "Thanks for the Unity!" by Mary Baird, *Crosstalk: Newsletter of the CWA Rank & File*, CWA Local 4304, Cleveland, June-July 1983, Vol. 2, No. 2.
2. *Emporium Capwell Co v Western Addition Community Organization*, 420 US 50, 95 S Ct 977, 88 LRRM 2660 (1975).
3. *NLRB v R C Can Co*, 328 F2d 974, 55 LRRM 2642 (CA5, 1962).
4. *Whirlpool Corp v Marshall*, 445 US 1, 100 S Ct 883, 8 OSHC 1001 (1980).
5. *Local 174 Teamsters v Lucas Flour Co*, 369 US 95, 82 S Ct 571, 49 LRRM 2717 (1962).
6. *Metropolitan Edison Co v NLRB*, 460 US 693, 103 S Ct 1467, 112 LRRM 3265 (1983).
7. *Richardson Paint Co v NLRB*, 574 F2d 1195, 98 LRRM 2951 (CA5, 1978).
8. *Arlan's Department Store*, 133 NLRB 802, 48 LRRM 1731 (1961).
9. *Boys Markets Inc v Retail Clerks Local 770*, 398 US 235, 90 S Ct 1583, 74 LRRM 2257 (1970).
10. *Buffalo Forge Co v Steelworkers*, 428 US 397, 96 S Ct 3141, 92 LRRM 3032 (1976).
11. *Carbon Fuel Co v United Mine Workers of America*, 444 US 212, 100 S Ct 410, 102 LRRM 3017 (1979).
12. *Complete Auto Transit Inc v Reis*, 451 US 401, 101 S Ct 1836, 107 LRRM 2145 (1981).

Sitdown Strikes 11.

What is the purpose of a sitdown strike in normal times? Is it a revolution? Is the union trying to seize the employer's property? No. Like other strategies and tactics—from a simple slowdown to a strike to a corporate campaign—the purpose of a sitdown is to exert enough economic and political pressure on the company to win the union's objectives.¹

The sitdown strike was *the* tactic used by American factory workers to organize unions during the 1930s.

The factory occupation was used by the Polish Solidarity movement in the massive 1980 strike wave that brought millions of workers into what was then an independent labor union fighting dictatorship. And in 1989 in Virginia the United Mine Workers took over a coal processing plant for three days in their winning struggle against the Pittston Coal Group.

When the sitdown or take-over has been widely used, it has been one of the labor movement's most powerful weapons. Irving Bernstein gives some idea of the importance of this tactic in his book *The Turbulent Years*:

In America the first modern sitdown occurred at the Hormel Packing Company in Austin, Minnesota, in 1933. In the next two years there were a number of "quickies" in Cleveland and Detroit auto plants, mainly over the speed of the assembly line. The technique spread to the rubber industry in early 1936 in the Goodyear strike, and within a

year virtually every factory in Akron had experienced sitdowns. In 1936 unionists were relying upon it in many industries—maritime, shipbuilding, glass, steel, hosier, textiles, oil, aircraft, shoes, urban transit, publishing, retail trade, hospitals, and numerous others, including, of course, automobiles.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were 48 sitdowns involving 87,817 workers in 1936, 477 such strikes in which 398,117 participated in 1937, and 52 sitdowns involving 28,749 in 1938. While most of these strikes were called by CIO unions in the mass-production industries and the tactic was symptomatic of the new unionism, many AFL unions, despite condemnation from [AFL chief William] Green and the Executive Council, employed the sitdown.²

Bernstein also describes the various sorts of sitdown strikes and their impact:

The CIO organizational drives, notably the one in the automobile industry, were given dramatic expression in an essentially new weapon, the sitdown strike. The workers took physical possession of the plant and its machines, ceased productive labor themselves, and prevented others from engaging in such labor. Since in the classic form the basic issue was recognition, the workers sat down until the employer agreed to deal with their union.

There were variations for lesser matters. The "quickie," a sitdown that lasted only a few minutes or an hour or two, was usually a protest against the speed of the assembly line. The "skippy," which bordered on sabotage, was a refusal to assemble every sixth fender or to tighten every fifth bolt.

From labor's point of view, the sitdown was marvelously effective. It brought production to an immediate and total halt, which, of course is the purpose of any strike. But unlike the conventional walkout, it allowed the employer no choice over whether he would operate or shut down, and thereby it automatically eliminated the scab. Picketing, with its accompanying legal complications, became unnecessary. Violence, while possible if the employer sought to evict the strikers by the use of police or troops, was readily avoidable.

The rash of sitdowns in 1936-38 caused no deaths and, apparently, only minor property damage—a sharp contrast to the contemporaneous and traditionally conducted Little Steel strike. In a large, integrated manufacturing operation, such as auto production, a relatively small group of disciplined unionists could cripple an entire system by seizing a strategic plant.³

Sit Down!

This song by Maurice Sugar, UAW General Counsel, became popular among workers in Detroit in the late 1930s.

When they tie the can to a union man,
Sit down! Sit down!
When they give him the sack they'll take him back
Sit down! Sit down!
When the speed-up comes, just twiddle your thumbs,
Sit down! Sit down!
When the boss won't talk don't take a walk,
Sit down! Sit down!

Canadian Auto Workers Bring Back the Sitdown

During the 1980s the Canadian Region of the United Auto Workers (now the Canadian Auto Workers—CAW-TCA) used plant take-overs several times. Auto parts workers sat in to fight for pensions and severance pay when plants were going to close, and in one case prevented a plant closing. After we



The Houdaille sit-down.

describe several of these take-overs, Buzz Hargrove, assistant to the CAW president, will make some generalizations about them.

The sitdown was first revived in the auto industry in Canada during the recession of 1980.⁴ Plants were suddenly closing one after another, and frequently employers were not paying workers the severance pay to which they were entitled, nor settling up on their pension benefits and health premiums.

The Canadian Council of the UAW was holding a meeting in its Port Elgin education center when management at the Bendix brake shoe plant in Windsor announced it was going to close—the next night. A worker from the Bendix plant rose to speak with tears in his eyes: “We can’t let this happen,” he said. “It isn’t right that employers can just walk away like this.” Bob White, Director of the Canadian

Region (now President of the CAW-TCA), told the delegates, “If it takes occupation of plants to stop this, then we’ll occupy them.” The delegates leapt to their feet in cheers, and the next day a group of workers at Bendix attempted to climb the fence and take over the plant. They were caught and that attempted occupation failed. But the idea had been planted, and soon another group of workers dared to try the old tactic.

Houdaille

The multinational KKR (Kohlberg, Krauk and Roberts) company announced that it was closing the Houdaille plant in Oshawa, Ontario in October 1980 and moving the equipment to South Carolina. Ironically, KKR had received money from the Canadian government to purchase that equipment. The union began to negotiate with the company over the terms of the closing.

In 1980 Houdaille had 240 employees, and the lowest person on the seniority list had been working 18 years. Houdaille wanted to force workers to wait till 65 for full pension, and was offering peanuts for severance pay and nothing toward health costs. The president of the company had retired with a lump sum of \$1,062,432, plus other benefits.

“When we tried to bargain with the company,” says Buzz Hargrove, “they wouldn’t move on the pension and the severance. That’s when the committee really said, we’ve got no alternative here. We’ve got to try something.”

At the end of July 1980 the local union leadership and other Houdaille workers met in the cafeteria and decided they would carry out a peaceful occupation of the plant. Bob White describes what happened next:

Keeping the organization tight and everything in good control, they walked into the plant and blockaded the gates. We didn’t want to lay ourselves open to charges of malicious damage, so the workers cleaned the plant until it was spotless. They even mowed the lawn and trimmed the hedges around the building.

A UAW banner was hung outside of the building, DAY 1—TILL HELL FREEZES OVER, and someone changed the figure each morning. Cots were set up and shifts arranged though a few workers decided they would stay inside until it was over. Relatives brought food, and workers scrupulously tidied up after they ate....After the first week the occupation became a major news story.⁵

The Houdaille occupation had the full backing of the UAW’s Canadian Region, and White visited workers at the plant to show his support. White also called UAW President Doug Fraser and convinced him that the UAW should give the workers strike pay.

Speaking to a rally in Oshawa, White said, “In case anyone is thinking about trying to break up this sit-in, I want to make it clear that we have 14,000 UAW members in the General Motors plants in this city, and we’ll empty those plants if need be. If someone tries to force these Houdaille workers out of here, those 14,000 workers will come over in waves.”⁶ It so happened that most of those 14,000 workers were on vacation at the time, and many of them were out of the city. But the employers and the government were

both aware that Oshawa was an auto worker center and that any attempt to oust the Houdaille workers could have both economic and political ramifications.

Two weeks later Houdaille caved in. The company agreed to pay workers with thirty years their full pensions, to give severance pay, and to make a lump-sum payment toward health premiums. Older workers with less than thirty years would receive full pensions at the age of sixty.

Not only did the Houdaille workers succeed in doing something about their own situation, but they also had an impact on plant closing legislation. At about the same time as the Houdaille occupation, the UAW joined with other unions to carry out an emotional demonstration. Workers from 30 plants carried coffins to Queens Park in Toronto. Union officials and workers testified at parliamentary hearings about the impact of plant closings. As a result of all of these actions, the Ontario government passed plant closing legislation requiring one week's severance pay for every year of service.

As Houdaille plant chairman Bill Rudyk said later, the occupation "made people aware of how easily plants could be shut down and operations sent to the U.S. and made them realize that it could happen to them."⁷

Windsor Bumper

There were about 200 workers at the Windsor Bumper plant as the union entered negotiations in 1981. Windsor Bumper was owned by Gulf and Western, a multinational listed as fifty-second largest corporation on the Fortune 500 list, with \$5 billion in sales and some 105,000 employees worldwide.

Dan Flynn was chairperson of the shop committee. He remembers, "They wanted to remove the COLA, that was the American-based idea. We said we would take them on on that issue alone if we had to." Management said it would close the plant if the union struck.

The company made a final offer which included lump sum payments rather than COLA. The members voted to reject and set up picket lines for a traditional strike. The company then announced that it was going to close the plant.

The union leadership met and decided to occupy the plant. Close coordination was established between Local 195 President Stan Weiko, Dan Flynn who would lead the occupation on the inside, UAW International Representative Andy Marocko, and Buzz Hargrove, who negotiated on the outside.

"I met with a number of key people in the plant," Flynn remembers. "I told them what the plans were, and the fact that they could be in there for an indefinite period of time, that we could end up in jail, that we could lose our jobs. I went through that with them, and told them that if they felt that they couldn't do that, that's fine, I understood that. We could use them on the outside if we couldn't use them on the inside."

Flynn also called other locals and people in the

community to come to the plant and support the picket line. The day the occupation began there were three hundred people picketing the plant.

"We knew the plant quite well," says Flynn, "and there was a hole in the back fence, so we just went through the hole and through a series of pallets and structures, and walked into the lunchroom and occupied it. We encountered one security guard on the way in, and he wanted nothing to do with it.

"The company of course requested us to move. The police came in, and we sat with the chief of police in a conference room with the industrial relations manager, who was on the phone with his superiors in the States. We met with one of our national reps at the same time, and we hashed it out with the police there. They said, you realize that you're violating the laws, that you're trespassing? We said, yes, we know that. They said, do you realize that you can go to jail? We said, yes, we know that; we're prepared to do what has to be done.

"In the end, they said we could stay. We had three hundred people out front. But they'd have two police standing out in front of the lunchroom and guarding us all night."

As the UAW *Solidarity* magazine reported, "For the next eight days—which at times seemed an eternity—they held their ground in the 25-by-25-foot lunchroom; nourished by food passed through a hole in the barbed wire fence by fellow strikers, friends and relatives."⁸

Flynn communicated with those outside the plant with a walkie-talkie. The occupiers passed the time by playing ball with makeshift equipment, playing checkers, and reading.

"We were in there on Father's Day, and we had all the wives and girlfriends bring the kids to the plant gate. There was no way they couldn't allow us to walk out and re-enter, so we went out and got the Father's Day greeting and a present from the kids and then went back in and remained in our sit-in. It was very moving.

"As a matter of fact, we snuck one of the wives in. It was the anniversary of one of the workers and his wife, so we snuck her in the plant with a hat and a shirt on and they were in the union office with candles for part of the evening, and then we snuck her back out."

The union leadership in the plant got word that the company was thinking of sending in private police to remove the workers, so they also smuggled in *Windsor Star* reporter Gus Carlson, who filed stories to his paper on the pay phone in the plant. In the event of a police attack, the reporter's presence might have helped deter police violence, and would have given an account to the public of what happened.

On the eighth day of the occupation, union negotiator Buzz Hargrove reached an agreement with the company. "We didn't achieve everything we hoped for," said Hargrove, "but we're satisfied that we made some major gains." Not only was the plant kept open, but the final agreement was 53 percent larger than the company's prior offer.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The union could consider the Windsor Bumper occupation a complete victory. However, not all Canadian UAW plant occupations were. We asked Buzz Hargrove to discuss some of the strengths and weaknesses of the occupations that the union conducted in the 1980s.

Q. What led the union to consider a plant take-over?

Hargrove. A take-over is obviously a political act, and people just don't do this without some major reasons. The question is: what are the issues? And do you have a chance of winning? At Houdaille we certainly didn't have any confidence that we could win the job issue. But we did feel we could put a lot of heat on the company to resolve the pension issues and the severance pay issue. And, as well, we felt we could make it a political issue in the country about what the obligations of the corporations are in a plant closure. It was national news in Canada for the entire 14 days of the take-over.

Q. What about the legal questions? Are the laws regarding plant take-overs any different in Canada?

Hargrove. Everything is the same in both countries, we were absolutely illegal. We were threatened by lawsuits against both individuals and the union. The question you have to ask yourself when looking at a take-over is: Do you have enough bargaining clout, do you have enough power to resolve those legal issues as well? We felt we did. At Houdaille, for example, we had the dies. They still had a couple of months' work to do for General Motors and Chrysler and we had control of the dies. There were key pieces of those dies that our people hid away for safekeeping, so that they could not produce those bumpers. So we knew we had a lot of pressure on the corporation. And if we handled it in a timely manner, we thought we could both win a decent settlement and avoid any lawsuits—and we were successful.

The ideal time when you don't have to worry about the legalities is when you've got maximum pressure on the company, when there's production requirements, just the same as if you're going into a legal strike. The fact that you can catch them off guard is a real advantage, because they haven't been able to prepare for it. They haven't been able to look at alternative sources of supplying the product. Surprise is a key factor.

Q. During the big sitdowns in the United States workers used blockades and sometimes welded themselves inside the plants. Did you do that?

Hargrove. In the initial days of the occupation at Houdaille they did all of that. They welded the doors shut, they used the jitneys [fork lifts] to put big racks of bumpers against the doors and up against windows. They prepared to keep the police from being able to get in.

Recently, we took over the Sheller-Globe plant in Windsor, a large multinational headquartered in the U.S. The workers blockaded themselves in the plant. The company called the police, and the riot

police went in, in the middle of the night. We thought we had everything blocked and locked and welded and sealed, but the police found a way in, and they dragged off all the workers, handcuffed them and threw them in a paddywagon and threw them in jail, held them overnight and released them the next morning.

However, though they moved the people out, Sheller-Globe was more than willing then to sit down and try and find a solution. We bargained an excellent settlement on severance.

We had one prior to that in Windsor, Great Lakes Forging in about 1984, where the same thing happened. We had 21 people in the plant. They had been locked out for about a year and they weren't taking over to stop production, just to highlight their problem. Windsor police moved in and arrested all of them. So it's not foolproof.

Q. What can you do to try to stop the police from getting involved?

Hargrove. The first thing is political pressure. In Oshawa, 20,000 General Motors members and their families live there, and the company, nor the police, nor the mayor, nor the politicians—none of them were willing to chance moving in and trying to move the workers out. In Windsor, in the Sheller-Globe sit-in we had an NDP [New Democratic Party] mayor, a social democrat, by the name of David Burr. We have a lot of clout in Windsor, and because he allowed the police to go in the Sheller-Globe plant, he was forced out of the mayor's seat. He didn't even stand for office in the next election, and that was the main reason for it.

Q. What are some of the practical considerations of a plant take-over?

Hargrove. Most people don't feel great about going into the workplace for eight hours a day, and when you make a decision to stay in there for 24 hours a day, for an extended period of time, there really are some difficult practical problems such as clothing and food and privacy.

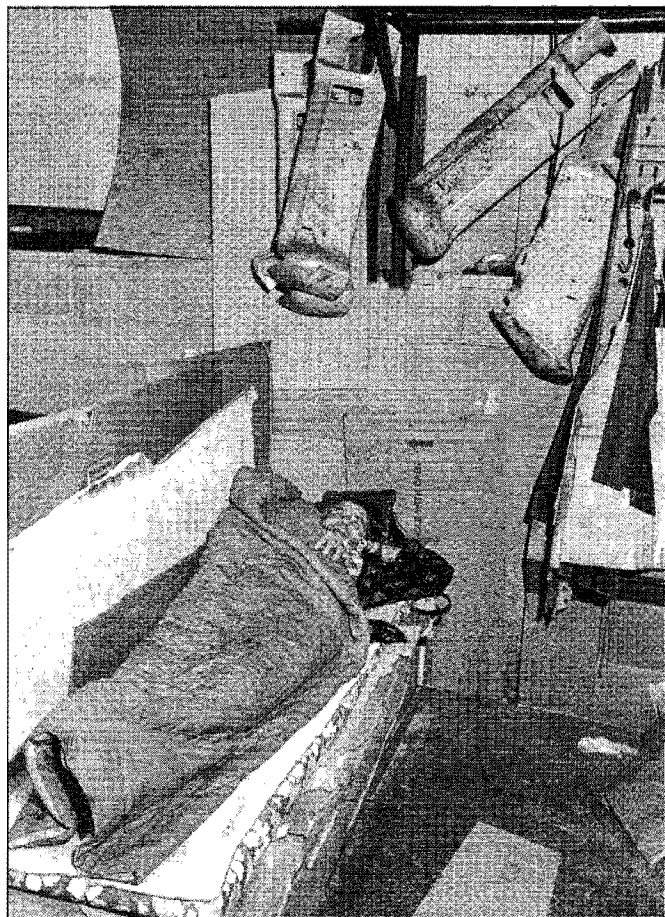
At Sheller-Globe we talked about it for a few days ahead of time with a small committee, and people actually drove a van into the plant with sleeping bags and night clothes and food, and people were packed up and going away for a few days. Those kinds of plans, if you can make them, are certainly helpful.

The Houdaille plant occupation lasted 14 days, but after the first three days, it was clear by statements from the mayor and the chief of police they were not going to interfere, and then people felt free to work the thing out in shifts. People could go home and take a shower, and we actually had complete control of the plant. People could come and go as they pleased, but we made sure we had a good group of people there at all times, so we wouldn't get surprised.

Q. What about reaching a settlement with the company while an occupation is going on?

Hargrove. Moving quickly is important. Some people in the labor movement criticized us on Houdaille: "After 14 days why did you end the occupation, it seemed as if you had the company on the

ropes." But what people don't know is, the thing starts to shift on you very quickly, and you have to recognize when you've really got the maximum. In an illegal situation especially, it really turns on you once the company's found a way to provide the product. Then the pressure turns on you, and you've got all the legal issues you can't resolve.



The Houdaille sit-down.

Q. Is there anything else you would add?

Hargrove. It's difficult for a local to do these things on their own, if you don't have the full support of the [International] union behind you. There's the worry of what that means in terms of the politicians or the police or the company's ability to kick the hell out of you. So it was important that we were all together on the issues.

Canadian Telephone Workers Occupy Plants

While the auto workers were occupying plants in Windsor and Oshawa, the Canadian Telecommunications Workers Union (TWU) used plant occupations in British Columbia on an even larger scale, involving thousands of workers. These plant occupations also involved threats of a province-wide general strike, coordination with the New Democratic Party (the

Canadian social democratic labor party), and calls for the nationalization of the telephone company. The story has been told by Elaine Bernard in her book *The Long Distance Feeling*, on which this account is based.⁹

The occupations came about as the culmination of a series of long, bitter struggles between the company and the union in the 1980s. In the 1960s the American multinational General Telephone and Electronics (GTE) bought British Columbia Telephone, a public utility. The company was militantly anti-union and had forced the TWU into an 81-day lockout in 1977-78. The TWU felt it had not been successful during previous strikes and the lockout because of a lack of communication and coordination. The TWU convention established special committees to come up with suggestions for strike strategies.

The union adopted two specific recommendations: 1) tighter strike administration, with a central strike director and communications officer, zone coordinators, and local strike committees in place well in advance; 2) "preventing the Company from forcing us off the job and...bringing economic pressure to bear on the company while remaining on the job."

In January 1980 contract talks were stalled. The union began what it called a "Super Service" campaign, a work-to-rule policy with workers following company regulations to the letter. Workers took great care in servicing customers. Production sunk to an all-time low.

In February the government's conciliation commissioner, Ed Peck, produced a report which made reasonable recommendations for a two-year contract. In September the TWU membership voted by 91 percent to agree to the Peck Report, but the company refused to accept it.

Selective Sit-In

The union decided to selectively strike the company's most profitable operations: computer services, construction (which did rewiring in new buildings), and PBX installers and repair crews who worked on large business switchboards. The selective strike was aimed at BC Telephone's money-making areas, its major business accounts; it did not affect the vast majority of telephone subscribers. The other advantage of a selective strike was that the company would not save as much on wages as in a company-wide strike, as most employees would still be at work. TWU President Bill Clark met with 500 workers in those departments, and asked them to be the front line of the selective strike. They overwhelmingly agreed.

The workers reported to work and "sat in" in coffee rooms and garages, playing cards or checkers inside and basketball or volleyball in the parking lots. No picket lines were put up because the union did not want to keep other workers out of the buildings. The union strike fund was used to pay the sit-in strikers 70 percent of their gross wage, while the 10,500 other workers who were not on strike were asked to contribute \$13 per week to the strike fund.

Within a few weeks the company found it had a big backlog of construction and switchboard work and began sending out supervisors to do the work. The union sent flying squads after the supervisors, some of whom cooperated by letting the union know where they would be working.

In October 1980 the talks broke down and two linemen in Prince George, Peter Massey and Don Gordon, decided to take action to end the strike. They entered the Prince George, B.C. telephone office, took over two rooms containing the electronic switching equipment, and barricaded themselves in. The pair demanded that the company sign a contract or they would cut off the city's commercial telephone service, leaving only residential and essential service. They warned the company that they had booby-trapped the computer and that if the company or police attempted to force their way into the rooms, they would wreck the computer equipment by spilling water on it.

This was not quite the "inside strategy" the union leadership had in mind. TWU President Clark told the workers he would do everything he could to get them out safely, but that the union could not support their action. Clark then got Jack Webster, emcee of a popular television talk show, to mediate the dispute in a telephone conference call between Clark and BC Telephone Chairman Gordon MacFarlane. Webster succeeded in getting MacFarlane to promise that there would be no legal or disciplinary action against the two workers, as long as there was no damage to the equipment.

Call for Nationalization

During September through November 1980 the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) held hearings on BC Telephone's request for a rate increase. The union argued that the rate increase would be used to buy expensive equipment from the parent company, GTE, while laying off hundreds of workers. TWU contended that the closing of traffic centers in many smaller cities and towns would eliminate 850 jobs and be economically devastating to those communities. TWU also argued that the company was making service to the customers a secondary consideration, and testified that the company did a poor job maintaining some of its equipment. The 43-day hearings were the longest in Canadian history and placed BC Telephone on the defensive.

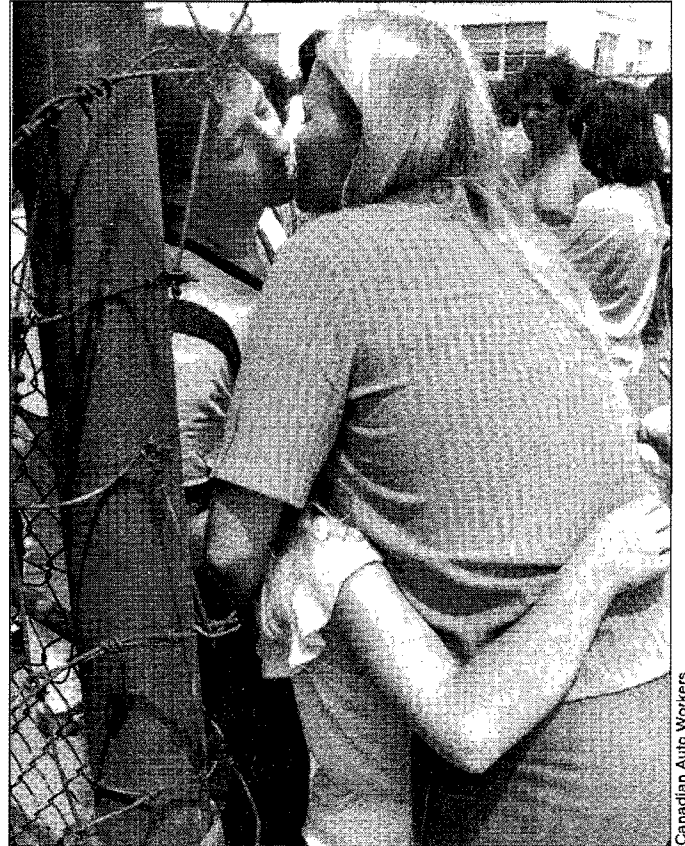
The union also used the CRTC hearings to call for the nationalization of BC Telephone, arguing that this was the ultimate solution to the problems of quality of service and ineffective regulation of the U.S.-owned company. The union started circulating a petition calling upon the British Columbia government to make the company a crown corporation (the Canadian term for a government-owned company). The union also put out buttons with the slogan "Crown Corporation Now" (i.e., nationalize the company now).

In November BC Telephone started to play legal hardball. They obtained an injunction against the

TWU's flying squads which limited pickets to two per building entrance and got an order to expel the 530 sit-in strikers from the company's property.

Management was furious at the "Crown Corporation Now" campaign, and began to discipline workers who supported it. On December 12 over 1,000 workers were sent home for refusing to remove the buttons. The TWU leadership, fearing that the button issue would become the pretext for a lockout, asked workers to stop wearing them until they got an arbitration decision on the issue.

Starting in mid-January 1981, BC Telephone began a policy of suspending a few hundred workers each week. The union decided it would pay these



Canadian Auto Workers

The Windsor Bumper plant occupation.

workers strike benefits, but with benefits already going to the 530 sit-in strikers, the union treasury was being drained. The company continued to escalate the number of suspensions each week until by the end of January there were 1,000 workers off the job. The union's strategy, unchanged since September, was faltering in the face of the company's selective lockouts.

Occupation

The TWU met in convention in January and in a closed session discussed various alternative strategies, with particular attention to options in the event of a lockout. Occupying the buildings was suggested, and the union's strike coordinator, Larry Armstrong, asked the local strike captains to poll their members on the possibility of staying inside.

On February 3, 1981, BC Telephone suspended 21 maintenance workers in the town of Nanaimo and another eight in Duncan. The workers there believed this was the beginning of a complete lockout. The Nanaimo workers gathered in the lunchroom of the company's headquarters and after consultation with the TWU headquarters in Burnaby, occupied the building. The union had recaptured the initiative.

The union established a door committee to check union cards of those who wanted admission to the building. Management personnel were confined to an office on the first floor. Workers replaced all supervisors, taking responsibility for staffing boards and maintaining switching equipment. In the evening reinforcements arrived with sleeping bags and food.

The workers hung a banner reading, "Under New Management, TWU" on the tower on top of the building, and a sign on the door read, "BC Tel, Now 100% Canadian Owned." The union was maintaining service and asked the workers to do their best possible work.

The occupation was completely illegal since the company had been granted an injunction prohibiting sit-ins two months before. But two days later the TWU Executive Board decided to extend the occupation to all BC Telephone facilities in the province.

"Our members will be staying on the job and providing basic telephone service," TWU President Clark told a press conference. "We are asking the public to support us by refusing to pay their phone bills. Our members will be working without pay and do not see why the company should be collecting from the public for a service we are providing for free."

In the telephone facilities throughout the province each strike committee established two sub-committees: a door committee to guard the building, and a staffing committee to see that the operating boards were covered. In Nanaimo the following rules were posted:

Door Committee:

Only one open entrance
Make sure fire exits are accessible
All other entrances manned
All windows on ground floor locked

General Rules:

Definitely no equipment damage
Encourage operators to give "best" service
No alcohol on premises or intoxicated people to come in (put them on another shift)
Set up shift schedules to cover 24 hours a day
Shifts to be 12 hours
Maintain all services, billing tapes, etc.
Keep premises as neat as possible (delegate housekeeping crews)
If RCMP [the Mounties] arrive to expel workers, no force, but don't co-operate (make yourself awkward as possible).

Clark called upon the workers to use no violence, and in the event of a police attempt to remove them, to use passive resistance, lying down and forcing the police to remove each worker individually.

While the doors were carefully guarded, reporters were welcomed inside so that the public could see the workers had nothing to hide.

Elaine Bernard gives a moving account of what things were like when BC Telephone was under workers' control:

With the workers in control, the regimentation which the company had demanded in the workplace was abandoned. Operators were no longer required to put up a flag when going to the washroom. Breaks were taken when required, and no one was reprimanded for talking too long with a subscriber. If workers found that calls were building up, they recruited volunteers from door committees or other workers in the buildings and trained them on the operating equipment. Operators varied their responses from the rigid mechanical replies demanded by the company.

In some areas operators decided to answer directory assistance inquiries with "TWU directory assistance" or "BC Tel, under workers' control." Workers rotated their jobs to reduce the monotony. Many workers took tours of the buildings and were shown jobs and tasks which they had only heard about. For many it was the first time they had seen other areas of buildings they had worked in for years.

But the key difference was the atmosphere of cooperation and responsibility. Craft and clerical workers gained new respect and sympathy for operators after experiencing the stress of the operator's job. More than one craft worker abandoned operating after only a few hours, finding it difficult to believe that anyone could work under such conditions for seven hours a day. For the first time in many years telephone workers felt proud of the work they did....They were able to exert some control over their work for the first time since coming to BC Telephone.

Public Sympathy

There was great sympathy for the telephone workers from the general public for several reasons: First, the company had rejected the original Peck Report, which proposed a reasonable settlement. Second, the union had used the rate hearings to criticize the company's policies which would lead to layoffs and, the union argued, poorer service. Third, the union continued to provide telephone service to the public. Finally, the occupation of the telephone buildings in British Columbia was taking place at the same time as the workers of Polish Solidarity were occupying factories throughout Poland, and coverage of the events was often juxtaposed in the newspapers.

The British Columbia Federation of Labour called a special meeting to come up with a strategy to support the telephone workers. Declaring "industrial relations war on the employers of British Columbia," President Jim Kinnard announced that the Federation would be initiating an "escalating program of economic action." To show their support, Kinnard and Jack Munro, regional vice-president of the International Woodworkers of America, visited the telephone workers in an occupied building.

The millions of dollars worth of sensitive electronic equipment provided the workers with some protection from the police. An attempt to oust the workers in one location would have been instantly communicated to other locations where angry workers might have lost their tempers amid the computers and switchboards. In any case, the police took the position that the occupation was part of a labor dispute and would not intervene until the courts decided to enforce the injunction.

In court the union attorney, Morley Shortt, argued that the occupation was peaceful, that no equipment had been damaged, and that by occupying the buildings the TWU had prevented a more serious confrontation. The court rejected the union's position and found the union guilty of criminal contempt. The judge declared that "a more blatant affront to the authority of this Court, the law and of the basic principles of an ordered society would be difficult to imagine." The court fined the union an undetermined amount to increase each day, suspending the sentence for two days to see if the union would vacate.

The union executive committee debated several alternatives: 1) stay in the building in defiance of the court order; 2) carry out passive resistance to the police removal of the workers; 3) march out of the building in an orderly fashion. It was decided that the first might lead to the destruction of the union by the government, that the second might divide the union between those who would resist and those who would not, and so the third option was adopted.

On Monday, February 9 the TWU instructed its members to evacuate the buildings after first arranging a tour to prove that everything was in order. The tour was to include a police officer, a representative of BC Telephone management, a local labor leader, and the press. The buildings were almost all evacuated on Monday evening or Tuesday morning. At the nerve center of the BC Telephone system in Vancouver, the union marched out of the building at 12 noon, led by a TWU member playing the bagpipes, and was greeted by hundreds of construction workers and other unionists in a show of solidarity.

The strike began immediately on the outside, with union flying squads shutting down everything related to BC Telephone.

National Government Intervenes

The cause of the BC Telephone workers was taken up in the national parliament in Ottawa by the New Democratic Party (NDP). The NDP asked the Labour Minister to intervene. The Labour Minister sent a mediator, who was shocked when the company refused to talk about any improvements in the contract unless it got a rate increase. That position was also widely criticized by the press. The *Vancouver Sun* called the company's position "corporate blackmail."

A tentative agreement was finally reached on March 2, a compromise on key issues of jurisdiction, scheduling, and money. But still the company and the union could not agree on the fate of 24 workers who had been fired in the course of the dispute.

Meanwhile the British Columbia Labour Federation decided it would carry out a series of one-day strikes in different cities, which, it said, would culminate in a province-wide general strike of all unions in support of the TWU. On March 6 the BC Federation struck the city of Nanaimo, shutting down the ferries, buses, paper mills, lumber mills, factories, wharves, drug stores, grocery stores, liquor stores, and post offices for 24 hours. The theme of the Nanaimo

general strike was the demand to nationalize BC Telephone, a slogan found on buttons, placards and banners throughout the city.

Finally, the provincial labor minister convinced the company and the union to compromise and let the fate of the 24 workers be decided by an arbitrator.

The contract was adopted on March 20 with 81% in favor. The workers went back three days later. Elaine Bernard ends her story of the strike this way:

After a confrontation lasting 536 days, including a four-month selective [sit-in] strike, a seven-day occupation in Nanaimo, a five-day province-wide occupation of telephone exchanges, a one-day general strike in Nanaimo, and the intervention of the federal labour minister, the provincial labour minister, the provincial leader of the opposition [party] and half a dozen mediators, the telephone workers had concluded another collective agreement.¹²

It is important to note that the telephone workers did not rely solely on their sitdown and their other economic pressure tactics. This pressure was paralleled by the demand for nationalization of the company. This agitation helped raise the struggle out of the economic plane, where the union was losing, and elevate it to a political plane where the union thought it might have a better chance. It was also aided by the existence of a social democratic labor party, the NDP, which could give voice to its demands.

UE Members Sit Down for Justice

In January 1990 members of UE Local 174 seized a small auto parts plant in the Philadelphia area to force the employer to pay wages, benefits and union dues owed them under the contract. SMS Automotive Products produced rebuilt automobile parts. The plant workforce was all male and made up of whites, Latinos, and Blacks, 70 workers in all.

"What we had," explains Bob Brown, president of UE District 1, "was a small, privately owned, family operation that had not reinvested in the company. They began to suffer some cash flow problems which resulted in First Pennsylvania Bank calling in their marker, which was in excess of one million dollars. The company closed its doors in October of 1989, with a two-day notice to the workers.

"At the time of the closing the company owed three to four months' worth of medical insurance premiums, vacation pay, and union checkoff for three months. In our negotiations in the several weeks that followed, we got the company to pay medical insurance through September, and to pay up the dues. That still left us with the medical premiums for October and the vacation pay."

The company's position was that as soon as they had liquidated and paid off their debt to the bank, then they would pay the workers.

"Once the liquidation began and we learned that buyers were coming and taking plant equipment and product out," says Brown, "we chose to occupy the plant to insure that our membership got what they had coming."

Prepared for Arrest

Before the workers actually took the plant there was a full discussion of what might happen. "We knew there was a very strong likelihood we would be arrested," says Brown, "and we were prepared for that. But that was not the real question. The question was



UE District 1 President Bob Brown, Shop Chairperson Mike DiBenedetto, and International Rep Mike Griffing put the UE lock and chain on the SMS plant gate.

were people prepared to get *re-arrested* over and over again to ensure that we had done everything we possibly could.

"I was encouraged to see that people very energetically came on board and said, 'We're willing to do it. We're owed this money. It's ours.' We have a right to demonstrate. A right to assemble. We have our First Amendment Rights. And though it is not in the Constitution or the Bill of Rights, we have the right to civil disobedience."

"This wasn't a hoax," says Shop Chairman Mike DiBenedetto. "We were prepared to stay until we got a settlement."

In planning the take-over, Brown explains, "We first dealt with the key leadership in the plant, that's four people, and then moved to a second tier of volunteers on the morning of the takeover. We had assembled people at a nearby hotel, organizing them to get there for a picket line outside the plant. Nobody other than the four leaders knew what our intentions were beyond the picket line. But we announced to the membership at large that morning about a half an hour before we actually did it, and asked for other volunteers and tried to limit it to less than 10 people. We ended up with eight total.

"We had the full support, financial and organizational, of the International union. We had lawyers on call, ready to do whatever was necessary to get us released and to defend us in court. My suggestion to legal advisors was that, if we did have to go to court, we should push for a jury trial, and that our defense be 'for reason of necessity.'" (The "necessity defense" has

been used in court by peace activists and environmentalists when they have engaged in illegal activities. They argue that their action is "the lesser of two evils": that it was necessary to break a particular law—against trespassing, say—in order to avert a greater harm—such as nuclear war or damage to the environment.)

The plant entrance was open because various companies were coming and going carrying off equipment. So the workers just walked in.

Padlocked

"Upon entering we put up a picket line outside," Brown remembers. "We had of course called all of the news media, who were on hand. As we entered, we padlocked the gate with chain and lock. There was only one person who had a key; he was on the picket line in case of an emergency. It was unknown to the police or anybody else on the picket line who had the key, or if in fact there was one. We went in and demanded that we be made whole for everything owed us under the contract.

"We took the plant on Thursday, January 18, 1990, and we negotiated with the employer until about 11 p.m., attempting to get a conceptual agreement before the lawyers could work out the actual language. But there was one delay after another. The company people wanted to leave, but they wouldn't leave unless we left. We finally reached an agreement on that: they asked us to relock the plant after everybody left and we could position somebody outside to make sure nobody got in, and then we would return at 8 o'clock in the morning, which we did. When we returned the next morning, we went in and then padlocked the gate again. A number of vendors came to pick up their materials and were turned away throughout the course of this.

"We also announced to the company and to the news media that we were prepared if arrested at the plant to go the next day to occupy a floor of First Pennsylvania Bank's headquarters in downtown Philadelphia, and to continue those kinds of occupations both at the bank and the plant until we were paid what we were justly owed."

While the union and the company negotiated, the eight workers continued to occupy the plant, with 35 workers walking the picket line outside. They carried signs reading, "The Banks Get Theirs After We Get Ours." Every night the union locked up the plant and placed a guard at the gate. The next morning the plant was occupied again, and the negotiations resumed. Because of the small number of people involved and the fact that they went home each night, the occupation required no special preparations. The workers ordered food and had it delivered.

The union invited the media to visit. "We took both the print media and the television stations inside the plant," Brown explains. "It got the word out to the community at large in the event that we needed to muster forces. And it enabled us to show by example that you do have recourse in the event of this kind of il-

legal behavior on the part of employers, if you're willing to bite the bullet and take it."

In the end the union won all its demands, around a \$40,000 settlement.

"The key here was that everyone acted in a disciplined manner," says Brown. "The unity of the workers was clear for all to see. And our demands were such that we held the moral high ground: this was money that we were owed."

"Secondly, we did not simply go after the small family owner of the business, we made it clear that the main adversary was the bank which was calling the shots. Our focus on the bank, including the threat to occupy a floor of their headquarters, led them to count their losses and come across with what they owed."

Brown believes that the UE's plant occupation has had a good effect both on the UE and on the local labor movement. "I know that our District Council which met in February was one of the most spirited council meetings that we've had in the past years as a result of this," says Brown. "And I know it was discussed by a number of AFL-CIO unions in the city, many of whose presidents I am in touch with, and they congratulated us and thanked us for paving the way and giving them some ideas about things they may have to do in the future."

"My father was a union man," says Shop Chairman DiBenedetto. "He taught me everything. This is what I believe in. It just ain't going to happen any other way. I really hope that other people get the same idea."

Pittston Miners Take the Tipple

A chapter on plant occupations would not be complete without the dramatic story of the United Mine Workers' take-over of the Pittston Coal Group's Moss 3 processing plant in 1989. The well-planned 77-hour occupation took place when the miners' strike was over five months old and is widely regarded as having forced the company back to the bargaining table.

Pittston, a multinational conglomerate, was out to destroy the Bituminous Coal Operators Association (BCOA) national master agreement—which sets standard wages and benefits in the coal industry—and seriously weaken the Mine Workers. The company was demanding huge concessions from active workers and benefit cuts from retirees, and wanted to pull out of the industry-wide pension and health care funds.

For 15 months before the strike began in April 1989, the miners worked without a contract, using the time to prepare for battle. Miners were trained in non-violent civil disobedience; community, spouse and family support was built; and laid-off and disabled miners were prepared to become as much a part of the strike force as active workers.

Throughout the summer of 1989, the UMWA employed a corporate campaign, roving pickets, mass demonstrations, direct action, and civil disobedience. Whenever the company got a court injunction against

certain activity, the miners responded by developing new tactics or reviving tactics of the past. Sometimes, the strike resembled the non-violent civil rights movement of 40 years earlier. Other times, it was a pitched battle in what UMWA Vice-President Cecil Roberts dubbed "class warfare in southwest Virginia."¹³

The strike had cut the company's coal production by 30%. Yet Pittston, bent on destroying the union and willing to sustain heavy losses to do so, refused to bargain.

Clearly, a dramatic act was needed.

The Turning Point

"The turning point of the strike was the takeover of the Moss 3 processing plant," says Brad Burton, director of UMWA Region 3. District and local officials debated the merits of the take-over tactic for several weeks, finally deciding that such a bold action might break the stalemate. "We knew we were placing the union in jeopardy," Burton says, "but we also knew the union was in jeopardy if we didn't win the strike."

The Moss 3 plant is one of the largest tipples, as such plants are called in coal country, in the world. All of the Pittston coal mined in southwest Virginia is shipped through Moss 3 to be sorted and cleaned. The 77-hour occupation shut down Pittston's operations and cost the company as much as \$1 million per day.

The union planned the occupation for weeks, with military-like precision. Each day, small amounts of supplies were brought into Camp Solidarity, the encampment of miners and supporters a mile down the road, so as not to attract the attention of state police stationed along the roads.

The logistics were timed to the minute. No one knew exactly what would happen except for the strike leaders—not even the 98 strikers who volunteered for "special duty" on September 17. Other miners from Illinois, West Virginia, and other parts of Virginia were given maps indicating Moss 3 and instructed to be there on September 17.

That day, at 3:30 pm, a convoy of miners and supporters began to arrive near the main plant gate. State troopers and company security guards, by now used to large demonstrations at the gate, quietly observed as the demonstrators gathered near a bridge a quarter mile from the plant.

By 4:15 about 1,000 people had gathered and more were waiting to be called in. Three large trucks wound their way up the road to the gates of Moss 3.

At the entrance to the plant, the trucks stopped, their rear doors opened, and out stepped 98 miners and one minister. Clad in camouflage—the symbol of their class war—and loaded down with sleeping bags, gas masks and rations, the 99 marched quickly into Moss 3. As they did, they raised their hands over their heads to show that they were unarmed. Two Vance Security guards at the front gate were caught off guard and fled. A few other guards, maintenance workers, and management personnel, badly outnumbered, retreated into an inner office, until they were escorted out by the occupiers.

As the miners marched into the plant, their 1,000 supporters massed at the entrance to prevent the state police from following them inside.

Word of what happened spread quickly throughout the coal fields. The state troopers called in reinforcements and blocked off all roads leading to the plant, hoping to stop the influx of more supporters. But within an hour, cars of supporters lined the roads leading to Moss 3. People started walking in over the hills, forcing the police to abandon the roadblocks.

By nightfall, miners from neighboring states and a caravan of supporters from New York had arrived, swelling the number outside the plant to 2,000. "They'll have to arrest each and every one of us out here before they get those inside," Cecil Roberts told the crowd. Fists shot up into the air. Chants of "Union" filled the countryside.

For the first time in the strike, the plant was in union hands.

Miners in Control

Throughout the occupation miners were stationed along the road between the preparation plant and Camp Solidarity. Using radios and walkie-talkies, miners stayed in constant contact with each other—planning strategy, organizing their supporters outside the plant, and monitoring the state troopers' movements.

The troopers had two main positions: one stationed across the road at the Clinchfield Laboratories; the other a quarter mile down the road at the scale house. A helicopter circled the plant constantly throughout the occupation. The miners allowed two state police to be stationed in the guardhouse on the plant grounds.

The first word to reach the outside after the takeover was a written statement by the minister who had accompanied the miners inside, Rev. Jim Sessions. Strike leaders had been worried that the group might be shot at on the way in, so all possible precautions were taken, including inviting Sessions as a symbol of non-violence.

"The Pittston Company claims ownership and control not only of this place, but of the Lord's day itself, and of these human beings whose labor and lives have built the company's wealth," the statement said.

"I would be personally and vocationally unfaithful were I not here to urge the nonviolent redress of grievances which the miners have so faithfully been seeking, to urge those now in bad faith to enter into

dialogue and reality, and prayerfully, into negotiations and a just contract for the sake of all Pittston employees."

After this statement was released, Vice-President Roberts led a delegation of two state troopers and a company inspector across the bridge and into the plant to inspect the facility and to



Some of the 98 miners occupying Pittston's Moss #3 plant read about themselves in the paper.

Cindy Reiman/Impact Visuals

prove that no damage had been done. The inspection became a daily ritual.

Despite the inspections and the miners' vow of nonviolence, each morning brought new rumors of the state police coming to evict the occupiers. In response, miners' supporters would flood the bridge at the entrance to Moss 3. The police never arrived.

"The main purpose of the people outside Moss 3 was to show support, but also to defend the occupiers inside," according to Brad Burton.

"Every day, when we were in front of Moss 3, we would discuss how best to defend the plant," said Mike Ruscigno, a Teamsters for a Democratic Union activist who traveled with the caravan from New York. "We would break into groups: those who agreed to be arrested and those who would provide support.

"And each evening we would walk back to the Camp and see the police buses lined up, ready to haul people off..."

When the police tried again to close the road leading to the plant on September 18, miners simply took supporters through the woods, around the police barricades, and up to the plant.

The days outside Moss 3 were filled with singing and with discussions on the significance of the occupation. Many compared it to the auto workers' Flint sit-down strike in 1937. Camp Solidarity ran a 24-hour kitchen; each day miners would bring sandwiches to feed the supporters.

unions were hung outside the plant. One sign from striking New York telephone workers—"From NYNEX to Pittston: The CWA Supports the UMWA"—became the miners' favorite; it was hung inside. The occupiers painted "UMWA Forever" and the numbers of the local unions involved in the sit-in on the outside of the plant.

Some supporters were allowed inside the plant to talk to the occupiers firsthand. Here the mood was upbeat. Some miners played cards or "horseshoes" made from rubber machine belts. Others simply sat outside on the big coal dust-covered roof and watched the thousands who had gathered below.

Pittston Coal Group President Michael Odom called the miners "violent" and claimed that he would never "negotiate with terrorists." In response, the occupiers, each of whom owned one share of stock in Pittston, told the press: "As stockholders we have the right to inspect our investment. What we are finding is that the scabs and management have left this place a mess and we'll have to be here for a few days to assess the damage."

'Stood the State on Its Head'

On September 18, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) filed court papers to have the sit-in declared illegal. A court official said the NLRB was seeking heavy fines, jail terms and an end to the \$200 weekly strike benefits to the occupiers. The following day, Circuit Judge Donald McGlothlin imposed fines of \$13.5 million against the UMWA for violations of court injunctions in July and August. The judge ordered UMWA leaders to order the occupiers out of Moss 3 or face arrest.

Instead, Roberts told the occupiers, "I figure they'll come looking for us to get arrested, but somebody will be there to fill our shoes. Just like with all of you—when you are arrested, others will be there to fill your shoes."

On September 20, Virginia Democratic Governor Gerald Baliles said that he would no longer allow the strikers to defy the state and federal governments. He ordered more state police into the area, to join the 300 state police and 200 marshals already there.

At 3:00 pm U.S. District Judge Glen Williams ordered the miners to vacate the plant by 7:00 that night, or face more fines and possible eviction.

In a show of strength, the miners ignored the deadline. Instead, they changed the location of their regular Wednesday night rally from a nearby town to the gate at Moss 3. At 7:00 pm 5,000 supporters rallied outside the tipple. Although the state police temporarily withdrew to a new location down the road, the air was tense as the crowd braced for a showdown.

For two hours the crowd heard speaker after speaker denounce the company and the police-state tactics of Governor Baliles. At about 9:30, just after a bluegrass band had finished playing, dozens of people suddenly surged toward the bridge and a wave of anxiety swept the crowd. For a moment, a few thought the troopers had somehow slipped through.

But then the crowd parted like the Red Sea and Cecil Roberts emerged from the plant. He ran across the bridge carrying the flag that had flown over the tipple, the 98 miners and Sessions behind him.

"We stood the state on its head. We defied all the forces trying to get us out—the courts, the state police, and Pittston," Roberts shouted to the crowd. "We only leave when the UMWA says that it's time to leave." As Roberts spoke, the miners somehow managed to spell out the letters "UMWA" against the wall of the plant with their flashlights.

As the rally broke up, Judge Williams retroactively extended his deadline to vacate the plant to 11:00 pm, and did not fine the miners for the action.

Deadlock Broken

The take-over of Moss 3 had a dramatic effect on the strike, which had not seen serious negotiations since early in the summer. Within days Pittston announced that it would return to the bargaining table. U.S. Labor Secretary Elizabeth Dole convened a meeting between the company and the union on October 14.

Ten days later, Dole announced the appointment of W.J. Usery, Jr. as a mediator. On December 31, a tentative agreement was reached.

The union won small wage increases and granted the company some concessions on "flexibility." The important part of the settlement, however, was that the union beat back Pittston's union-busting and checked, for a time, continued erosion of the BCOA agreement. The miners had forced Pittston to stay in the industry-wide pension and health funds, something CEO Paul Douglas had vowed before the strike that the company "would never do."

Eddie Burke, one of the strike's masterminds, says, "It was a psychological tune-up for our folks—people started saying, 'Why didn't we do that before?' There was just a warm glow throughout the area. And it had to have a severe psychological impact on the other side up in Greenwich, Connecticut. Every time a big truck would go by they'd start worrying, 'Are those guys going to do it again?'"

Conclusions

In workplace occupations, just as in work-to-rule campaigns, slowdowns, in-plant strategies and strikes, the key is to hurt the company economically: look for the leverage points. In the case of Houdaille, for example, the union's leverage was that the company owed its customers a few weeks' more production.

Following are some technical and political points about a workplace occupation:

1. The workplace seizure depends upon the element of surprise. Everything must be planned secretly and workers must then act quickly.

2. At the same time you must try to organize ahead of time as much as possible—clothes, food, recreation equipment, VCR, classes on union history.

3. The workers' strong point is that they have seized valuable property, machinery, parts, or finished products. They will want to protect and maintain that equipment, because that is the source of their power. Sometimes employers and police are reluctant to use force to remove sitdowners for fear of damaging property. Strikers may wish to remove some key components and put them in secret locations for safekeeping.

4. There are two different sorts of plant seizures, those where workers stop production to cause the company economic harm (as in the Canadian auto workers' case), and those where the workers continue production to make the point that workers and the society should run and own the company (as with the British Columbia telephone workers). If your union provides a service to the public and you decide to continue to provide it during the sitdown, you will want to prepare materials for the public explaining why service is better now—because you're doing the work the way it should be done, instead of by management's rules.

It may be possible to combine these two sorts of sitdowns. For example, telephone workers may seize a telephone company, provide telephone service, but stop running the billing tapes, so that the customers cannot be charged: the public is happy and the company is made rather miserable.

5. As in any other strike, it is important to keep people organized to carry out all the necessary social functions (maintenance, housekeeping, cooking), to carry out the strike (picket duty, negotiations, publicity, outreach), and to keep up morale (recreation, entertainment, education). Strike organizers must plan activities like basketball games or guest entertainers or speakers, while at the same time preventing drinking or drugs. *It is important to give everyone a role.*

6. What goes on inside an occupied workplace is only one small part of the process. It is absolutely essential that the sitdowners have support from other unions and the community. Workers from other unions, family and friends can be recruited to picket or to keep the police from using force against the strikers.

7. You may want to arrange tours for the press or for neutral observers or the police to show how the workers are conducting the sitdown.

8. Decide in advance your reaction if the police are called in to remove you. Everyone should carry out the policy together.

9. As in other union job actions, it is important to explain to the public what you are doing and why, in terms that will win their sympathy and support. One way is to link your demands to those of other workers and consumers, as was done by the Houdaille workers with plant closing legislation and by the telephone workers with the rate increase hearings.

10. Sitdown strikes are not protected by labor laws and they may be technically illegal (trespassing is a misdemeanor). In addition, many separate acts conducted during the course of a sitdown may also be il-

legal (breaking and entering, for example). Therefore it is important to reach settlement as quickly and as completely as possible, getting the various corporate, police and political authorities to agree on a settlement which includes amnesty. (See Note 1 at the end of this chapter.)

11. Remember that this sort of strike usually will not be resolved simply by talks between local management and local union, but will also involve corporate officials, police chiefs, or government officials. Unions choose a sitdown strike because they otherwise have insufficient economic leverage; the goal is to lift the issues out of the economic arena and place them in the political realm.

12. Because workplace occupations tend to become such a very big deal, it is difficult for workers to carry out such actions without the support of their local and national unions. There have been moments in history in certain countries—England in the early 1920s, the U.S. and France in the 1930s, Poland in the 1980s—when workers could and did seize factories on their own initiative without union support, or even contrary to the wishes of their union leadership. These were moments of great worker solidarity and deep economic, social and political crisis. At the present moment, an occupation of any duration usually requires at least the tacit support of the International union, and probably its wholehearted backing.

Action Questions

A discussion of these questions should be discreet. You might want to limit it to a few trusted union members.

1. What is the economic situation of your company? Of your plant? Do you have any trusted friend in management or an office worker who can get you information about management's plans for the future?

2. What is the issue you are confronting? Impending contract expiration? Contract violations? A company plan to contract out or close down?

3. How do the workers feel about the issue? Does the issue affect a small group, most people or everybody? Will it ultimately have an impact on everybody? How can you explain the issue in such a way that people will see the necessity to act?

4. What are the ways you might deal with that issue? Why are you thinking of using a sitdown strike? How will people relate to the idea of a sitdown?

5. Who would you have to put pressure on to win your goal? Local management? The head of the company? The head of the parent corporation? An outside financial institution like a bank? The political powers that be? The mayor? The governor?

6. What would force the company to give in? The economic pressure? The bad publicity? The threat that the strike would spread to their other facilities?

7. Whom would you need as allies to win such a fight? Other unions? The community? Churches? Politicians? Make a list of the allies you would need in your town.

8. It is usually hard to pull off a sitdown strike

without the support of the national or International union. How would you get the support of your district office? Of your national or International? Make a list of the officials of your union: who would be with you? Who would be against you? Who would be on the fence? How would you win them over? Should they be brought into the planning from the beginning?

9. A sitdown strike is sometimes called a plant seizure or a factory occupation. What do you intend to "seize"? The entire workplace? A particular department? Is the seizure meant to actually paralyze production? Or is it largely symbolic?

10. Will all workers be allowed to participate in the sitdown, or will it be limited to a smaller group? Who will be in that group? Who will be the decision makers? How will others be informed of the decision to occupy the building?

11. Will workers simply stay in at quitting time? Or will a group of workers return to the plant when unexpected and occupy it? If the latter, how and where will they enter the plant? What can they expect when they get there? (Will alarms go off? Will security guards be on hand?)

12. What material preparations have to be made? Bedding? Clothing? Food? Water? Sanitary provisions? If the occupation is expected to last more than a couple of days, how will supplies be brought in?

13. How will you arrange for morale-building activities such as classes, entertainment, recreation and sports?

14. Will you need any rules for the occupation? Rules about drugs and alcohol? Rules about who talks to the press? Rules about how to deal with the use of force by security guards? Rules about how to deal with the police in the event of arrest?

15. Will there be an inside group and an outside group? Who will make up each group? What will be the responsibilities of each group? How will they communicate?

16. Where will you get your legal back-up? From the International? The district? The local? From some outside attorneys?

17. Is there anything in the plant that you will want to "put in safekeeping" (things without which the plant won't run)? Where are they now kept? Where will you put them?

18. How will you defend yourself against ejection by company security or the police? ("Defending your-

self" is both a practical and a political question. Chaining the gates shut may keep security out for a while; a press conference held in the occupied plant may be more important protection.)

19. What will be your attitude toward the news media? Is there someone you trust who can be invited in from the beginning? Or called immediately after the occupation begins?

20. Who will be on the committee to deal with your lawyer, management, the police, the military, politicians, the government? Who has ultimate authority to settle?

Notes

1. In the United States, sitdown strikes are not specifically outlawed but neither are they protected by the labor laws. Trespassing, which could be invoked in many sitdown strikes, is a misdemeanor. Lengthy sitdown strikes are not protected, even if provoked by serious company unfair labor practices. *Fansteel Metallurgical Corp*, 306 US 240, 59 S Ct 490, 4 LRRM 515 (1939). But sitdowns have been protected in some situations, such as where the sitdown was brief, there was no established grievance procedure, and there was no violence. *NLRB v Pepsi-Cola Bottling Co*, 449 F2d 824, 78 LRRM 2481, 79 LRRM 2191, (CA5, 1971), cert denied 407 US 910 (1972).
See the stories in this chapter for comments on the legal status of sitdowns in Canada.
2. Irving Bernstein, *The Turbulent Years: A History of the American Worker: 1933-1941* (Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1971), p. 500.
3. Bernstein, p. 499.
4. This account is taken in part from Bob White, *Hard Bargains: My Life on the Line* (McClelland and Steward, Toronto, 1987), pp. 224-228.
5. White, p. 226.
6. White, p. 227.
7. Canadian Auto Workers Local 222, *History of Local 222 (50 Years)*, 1987.
8. "They Sat In—And Saved Their Jobs," *Solidarity*, Summer 1981, pp. 4-5.
9. Elaine Bernard, *The Long Distance Feeling: A History of the Telecommunications Workers Union* (New Star Books, Vancouver, 1982), Chapter 10, "The Occupation," pp. 192-222.
10. Bernard, page 210-211.
11. Bernard, page 211.
12. Bernard, page 222.
13. See "Thunder in the Coal Fields," a special supplement to the *Roanoke Times and World News*, for a full account of the Pittston strike. See Appendix E.

Inside Strategies 12.

Through the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's, unions became accustomed to an orderly pattern of bargaining: negotiations every three years and a contract with moderate but respectable gains. The occasional strike was usually an orderly affair as well, with workers "picketing the fence." But when the era of concessions began in 1979, employers began using a new approach to collective bargaining: demand concessions, and if the union threatens to strike, bring in scabs.

The employers had the upper hand. The recessions of 1974-75 and 1979-81 had left many unemployed workers on the streets, desperate for employment, so desperate they might even take another worker's job. Many of the corporations using the new hardball tactics were gigantic multinationals that had decentralized their production throughout the world. If a strike occurred in New Jersey or Indiana, they were prepared to continue production in Singapore or South Africa.

Slowly and painfully, union members discovered that the old tactics which had gained them their comfortable three percent per year were not working. A number of traditional strikes went down to defeat. At Phelps Dodge in 1984, for example, the company introduced scabs under the protection of the state police, sent in by Democratic Governor Bruce Babbitt. The unions were decertified.

If the union movement were to survive the 1980s it would have to find new ways to resist concessions and prevent union busting. One such strategy was first revived and tested by auto workers in Missouri and aerospace workers in Texas. The chief architect of what became known as the "in-plant strategy" was Jerry Tucker.

The in-plant strategy, like so many other great ideas, was not exactly new. Tucker, who was on the staff of the UAW's Region 5 at the time, credits assistant regional director Julius Frazer with remembering that such a strategy had worked at Westinghouse in 1957. The in-plant strategy as Tucker and the local

unions in Region 5 worked it out was a campaign of work-to-rule, slowdowns, in-plant solidarity activities, and other forms of resistance calculated to cause enough economic damage to make a concession-demanding company reconsider. It depended on an economic analysis of the corporation, an awareness of corporate politics, a sensitivity to the union membership, and a keen feel for the tempo of developments. The best thing about it was that it worked.

The in-plant strategy has been detailed by the AFL-CIO Industrial Union Department in a manual called *The Inside Game*. It has been used by other industrial workers including cement workers and rubber workers, and there have been attempts to apply it to office workers and hospital workers as well. Here we will use as our examples the UAW locals where the strategy first evolved.

Moog and the Birth of the In-Plant Strategy

As a staffer for UAW Region 5 in St. Louis, Jerry Tucker was assigned to help the workers at Moog Automotive, an after-market parts supplier. Moog employed 400 plant workers and 100 in its warehouse. The workforce was diverse, about half white and half Black, half male and half female, with a big age spread. The workforce was relatively high skilled, including tool makers, machinists, and foundry production workers.

Moog demanded big concessions, including elimination of COLA and a wage freeze for the non-skilled workers, and brought in a union-busting law firm. A connection in the personnel department revealed that the company had pre-screened 400 people to act as strikebreakers.

"The tendency amongst some of the bargaining committee," Tucker remembers, "was to say, 'Well,

the hell with them. We'll just muscle them.' But this was a plant that had no long-term orientation for strikes and struggle. It simply would have destroyed them. There were already strikes going on in the community where 10,000 workers would show up to take the jobs of three or four hundred workers who were out on strike. This is 1981, and in each and every one of the cases, those strikes had been broken."

It was clear to Tucker and to shop chair Mike Cannon "that if we had put the people on the street, we were as much as committing them to a defeat." Tucker and Cannon began to talk to the committee about alternatives to striking.

The local leadership also had to be convinced of something else: the need to open up the entire bargaining process to the members. "Normal business unionism used to require that the bargaining committee go off somewhere and do its job and keep the membership very remote from the process," says Tucker. "Then the committee comes back with something and has the membership vote on it. It was obvious that that was not going to serve our purposes, that the membership had to be brought along all the way."

Identifying Local Leaders

One of the key parts of the in-plant strategy, says Tucker, is identifying local leaders: "It's always better if they happen to be elected people with responsibility in the plant—although that doesn't always turn out to be the case."

They began with the stewards, meeting before and after work. Moog was an old CIO local, organized in 1937, and it had a strong structure of about 30 stewards. They began to hold in-plant meetings with the workers to identify other key activists. "I just kept asking for more people. I kept saying, 'We've got to get more people involved.'" Jeff Stansbury, a writer for the UAW's *Solidarity* magazine, called this the "more hands on the hoe" approach.

The company, Tucker remembers, tried to keep the union negotiating committee bottled up in meetings. But given the company's intransigence, what happened in the plant was far more important than what was happening at the bargaining table. So the committee would adjourn meetings with the company to have meetings with the stewards.

As the deadline neared, the local leaders convinced the membership that they needed to fight for a decent contract, but without striking. It was important that the committee was united on this strategy, because a divided local leadership would have made it well nigh impossible. The support of regional and International officials was also important.

The In-Plant Strategy Is Adopted

The local membership meeting voted to reject the contract, with the understanding that they would stay in the plant and conduct a job action which would "cause the company to rethink its position." This on-going job action would be coordinated by the

"solidarity committee," which quickly grew to about 100 members out of the 500 workers in the two locations.

Tucker met with a company representative and told him the contract was rejected but the workers were staying on the job. "How can you do that?" the personnel man asked. The company had been caught completely by surprise.

The company demanded a meeting with the Federal Mediation Service. Tucker said that the workers were "returning to work under the terms and conditions of the contract which had just expired. That phrase was important. The company could not just unilaterally change the wages, conditions of work."¹

"So the workers stayed in the plant. I had told them on that Sunday that each individual was going to have to find ways to re-evaluate their work procedures so as to get the company's attention. And nobody misunderstood that. You dealt with a lot of doublespeak in large meetings. Because there were people who would go right back and tell the company.

"But the message was clear. We were going to operate at two levels: individuals were going to have to depreciate productivity, and then there were going to be concerted and collective activities to do the same."

During the next six months there were frequent meetings, always conducted along the same lines:

1) An intelligence report. Workers were asked, "What are you hearing? What's going on in the foundry? What's going on in the machine shop? What are the foremen saying?" As Tucker says, "We made people be very keen eyes and ears."

2) A production report for each department. How effective were the work-to-rule and slowdowns? How much had production decreased? If production was not down in some departments, then why not? "What do you need? Reinforcements?"

3) A strategy session. Part of the strategy during the first few weeks was to constantly file grievances. The heart of the strategy, however, was the work-to-rule campaign and the slowdown. It was at Moog that the phrase "running the plant backwards" was coined. The bottom line was always to put economic pressure on the company.

The solidarity committee also began to organize other in-plant activities. The workers wore various buttons and leaflets were distributed in the plant. Songbooks were issued and during breaks and lunch or immediately before or after work they would rally and sing "Solidarity Forever" and "Which Side Are You On?" These activities helped to build solidarity, confront management, and reinforce the more important economic actions.

One of the activists involved in carrying out the strategy was Sue Smith. "What we tried to do," says Smith, "was get as many people involved as we could. Some people kept a low profile, it was an individual decision how much they wanted to be open, but we tried to get across to them that if we all stood together, we could be more powerful for the bargaining committee."

After a few weeks the company finally reacted: they fired seven people and wrote disciplinary notes against several others. Anticipating such firings, the union had begun what it called a "solidarity program." Each worker was asked to contribute \$5 a week to support any victims of the guerrilla warfare. So when the firings took place, the union already had support in place.

In addition, the International union agreed to provide the fired workers with regular strike benefits of \$80 per week plus health insurance. The financial



The Moog solidarity core group. Shop chair Mike Cannon is third from right in the front row, and Jerry Tucker is on the far right.

support was important both in material terms and in maintaining morale.

In response to the firings and other company attempts at intimidation, the union leadership called a union meeting during the work day. "I got a call from the company," Tucker remembers, "and they said, 'What do you mean? You can't do this! This is a wildcat!' I said, 'What do you mean a wildcat? We don't have a contract with you. We're just simply having a meeting and the workers can come if they want to. I think they will. I'm going to give them a report on yesterday's negotiations.' The company man said, 'We didn't negotiate anything.' I said, 'That's what will be reported.'"

The union meeting stopped production on both the day and night shifts. Most of the plant's workers attended, the first time that the entire workforce had taken an action together. A second such union meeting was called a few weeks later.

Focusing on Key Departments

"Now," says Tucker, "we began focusing, looking for the key departments. Our folks working on the video terminals where the shipping occurred were able to hack back through the company system and find out where all the production inventories were. So we could identify the forge machine and job number to shut down so that that inventory would be dry and kept dry, and customers would be banging away on the company. They were facing a tremendous amount of customer pressure, because they sell to

Montgomery Ward and Sears."

One of the key departments they identified was the foundry, the heart of the entire production operation. At the center of the foundry was a large forging machine that turned bar stock into coil springs. If a piece of bar stock got caught sideways in the machine, it would melt and immobilize the machine. For one reason or another, that began to happen more and more frequently.

The union continued filing grievances, and now began to write up every health and safety concern. They alleged that a chemical dust used to coat springs was a hazard to the workers' health. Sometimes the workers used group grievances which might involve a certain amount of physical intimidation.

The foundry workers, who were used to throwing steel around all day—"a bunch of big, mean, dirty-looking guys," according to Tucker—went in a large group to their foreman and demanded a meeting over grievances.

"What the hell are you doing in here?" shouted the foreman, "Get back to work." "No," said Pee Wee, the spokesman for the foundry workers, "we're going to have a meeting with you." "No, you're not," said the foreman. "Who's going to stop us?" asked Pee Wee. Looking at Pee Wee and the rest of the foundry workers, the foreman thought better of the matter and sat down and let the entire foundry crew express their dissatisfactions with the job.

The skilled trades workers decided to confront the vice-president of engineering. At the end of their lunch break, they went in a group to the plush corporate offices on "Mahogany Row" and encircled the vice-president's desk. He began to stammer and stutter, screaming, "Get out of here, get out of here, you people can't be in here." The workers laid out a long list of grievances. Their action was a big morale shot for the whole workforce.

The union began to call not only for solidarity committee meetings every Wednesday, but also for department meetings. Meetings were held with the foundry, with the machine tool group, with the skilled trades. Each department was asked to come up with something new to put pressure on the company's production. And the workers in one department began to compete with workers in another to see which group could do the most to get management's attention.

The workers were taking complete control over production. "When a machine operator put a machine down, then the maintenance crew would come in and make sure it stayed down," says Tucker. "What was a 24-hour repair became a 36-hour repair."

The Settlement

After almost six months of guerrilla warfare, Tucker got a call from the company's attorney.

"He said, 'I guess you know why I'm calling.'"

"And I said, 'Well, I had an assumption somebody would be calling.'"

"And he said, 'You've won. The company wants

it over. What is it you want to settle?

"And I said, 'The committee wants just exactly what we were prepared to settle for in September when the contract expired, no more, but not one penny less. The three percent raise, the COLA, everything on the union's agenda. And we want full amnesty, every one of the workers who has been fired and disciplined brought back with absolute clean records. And I've got a few language changes because some of the company's actions tell us that job security for the workers is problematic.'

"And he says, comic remark, 'Is that all you want? I can get you more.' And he meant it, the bastard."

Moog agreed to everything, just as the lawyer had said they would. The committee insisted on some new job security language, because during negotiations Moog had talked about moving. The new language said that if Moog moved the plant or any portion, building, facility or operation, the union contract would move with it. (A subsequent bargaining committee two contracts later eased up on that language and the company has since moved work.)

Not only did the Moog workers stop the takeaways and win everything they had shot for in their contract. "The membership had a great sense of self-esteem," says Tucker. "That unit became literally the inspiration for auto workers throughout the St. Louis area and even our [eight-state] region for a period of time."

Solid at Schwitzer

The next struggle in the development of the in-plant strategy was in 1983 at Schwitzer Manufacturing in Rolla, Missouri, about a hundred miles from St. Louis. There had once been copper and tin mines in the area, so though it was largely rural, there were union traditions. Schwitzer employed about 130 workers making fans for cars, tractors and big earth-moving equipment.

At the time Schwitzer was owned by a larger corporation which sent in a former football player—"Dutch"—to represent the company. Dutch told Tucker that the company was considering the use of scabs and came in asking for concessions of more than \$2.00 per hour.

More Hands on the Hoe—Lots of Hands

The solidarity committee was formed only two weeks before the contract expiration. In this small plant there was no steward structure; the bargaining committee was only three people. Tucker asked them to get a key group together; 27 people showed up.

Tucker met with a smaller group to talk about "getting management's attention"—practicing some slowdown activities before the contract expiration. He found later that he could have talked to the whole 27; it was "a spy-less situation." The committee began setting up charts for intelligence gathering.

On the Sunday when the contract was rejected, Tucker asked the local leaders to expand the solidarity committee. When he came back on Thursday, "there were all 127 people, minus the one who was on sick leave and the two who were on vacation. I said, 'This isn't a union meeting. I wanted a solidarity meeting.' The chairman of the shop committee, Jerry Livesay, said, 'This is the solidarity committee. Nobody wanted to be left off.' And it worked that way from there. Whenever we met with the solidarity committee we met with the membership."

Tucker remembers, "They had done their homework: they dropped production from whatever was standard 100 percent down to about 20 percent—and it stayed there for 11 weeks. It never budged. They figured out ways to keep those presses down. Dies in the die shop. Dies in transit. Dies hidden behind racks. This was a tough bunch of folks. My admiration for them is eternal."

At the same time the workers found that through ties to unions at suppliers and customers they could also put pressure on the company. Thanks to these connections, parts produced by Schwitzer were turned away by some customers.

Another tactic was health walkouts, Tucker recalls. "One day the company started spreading muriatic acid as a dust container over some of the aisles and in a storage area. The workers held a meeting in the cafeteria and said, 'We're not going to work under these unsafe conditions.' Somebody called OSHA and said, 'We're walking out of here.' They left a written grievance in the plant saying that they had been subjected to toxic substances."

After several weeks of slowdown and disruption, the company began to discharge workers, eventually firing 37 of the 130 workers before the contract was settled. The 37 received strike benefits and insurance from the International, and small contributions from their solidarity fund. Other local unions in the region also contributed.

Schwitzer then began calling in employees from the layoff list. "The workers from the layoff list would come in and immediately join the solidarity program," Tucker remembers, "even though they'd been laid off without any money. The solidarity committee had been careful to call them and give them an orientation before they came back to work. They held some meetings with the laid-off workers, and said, 'They're firing us, they're probably going to call you back....' "

War of Attrition

The war of attrition continued. Production proceeded at twenty percent. But the union kept looking for new tactics. At one of the solidarity meetings in November, the die makers came up with an idea: "Deer season is coming, and we don't want to work anyway. We've got a plan. Why don't we start taking off every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, just the five die makers?"

Tucker said, "Well, you know they're firing people." The die makers said, "Oh, they won't fire us."

They can't get die makers, they've tried. There's not a die maker available in this area and no one from St. Louis, except a bunch of rum-dum drunks who will screw everything up, so what the hell." Tucker called the University of Missouri to check if there were a ready supply of die makers around, and found that the Schwitzer workers were right.

"These guys were pretty staunch in their determination," says Tucker, "so they took off Monday. They came back Tuesday, and they asked management, 'Well, how did you like that?' Management said they didn't like that. The die makers said, 'Well, you're going to get it again tomorrow.' And they took off Wednesday, and Wednesday afternoon I got a call from Dutch, very contrite. 'We got a problem,' says Dutch.

"By Thursday morning we're back in negotiations and by Thursday night we've got the whole thing wrapped up, and every takeaway was off the table. Wage increase of three percent each year, COLA was maintained, no co-pays on insurance, pensions were increased, and all 37 workers were brought back with full back pay and no penalty.

"And the company was damn glad to get out of it. The production manager told me afterwards, 'I was never so glad to see that S.O.B Dutch out of here and our workers back to work.'"

More Discipline Than a Strike

Also assigned to the Schwitzer campaign was Jeff Stansbury, at the time a reporter for the UAW's *Solidarity* magazine. "The thing that struck me," says Stansbury, "was that the depth of organizing was both deeper and wider than in most strikes that I've ever seen. The requirements for discipline and for timing are greater and subtler than in most strikes.

"A thoroughly educated and involved rank and file is the core of the strategy. It requires preparation. There has to be a lot of discussion of this strategy versus the strike, versus doing neither, during which time there will be opposition. There will be opposition because it goes against the grain of people who are used to the more flamboyant and open form of struggle of the strike. What is essential, well before the contract expiration, is to build in time for education and to do it very patiently, and do it in front of the whole shop or in departments, and let that continue until there is an understanding of what's involved, and that includes the risks.

"One of the things they were always up front about was that this was going to generate firings, some people would lose their jobs. In a successful slowdown they would get their jobs back. But that was a gamble, because if the thing flopped you wouldn't get your job back.

"At Schwitzer they had virtually 100 percent turnout for the solidarity committee, and that was symbolic of what a good slowdown is. Everyone is involved, everyone has a role to play, and everyone is part of a highly disciplined effort. They even decided who was going to be fired, rather than let the com-

pany choose.

"Schwitzer was an example of having the most vital jobs, the ones the company couldn't fire from, take the burden of the most dangerous activities like sick-ins. They were people who the company would have a very hard time replacing. The committee learned more about the operation than most of the Schwitzer managers, they knew exactly the status of inventory, they had close connections to the customers, so if there was a union at the customer, that union would be returning parts—even good parts.

"You need to set up something like the solidarity committee, because in most cases you cannot rely on the existing leadership. You cannot even necessarily



Jerry Tucker.

rely on the activists of a local, because those activists tend to have been formed under more rigid or predictable circumstances than occur in a slowdown. The thing is to create a blend of old and new leadership which doesn't threaten the old leadership but which gives room for new leadership to emerge.

"So I found the solidarity committee to be an art form. It was a matter of touch and sensitivity and above all timing. This is true of all good organizing: you always have to be ahead of the curl of the wave, and not allow a sag to occur that would lead to a sag in morale."

Slowdown and Showdown in North Texas

The next step in the development of the in-plant strategy began in 1984 at Bell Helicopter in Fort Worth, Texas and at LTV in nearby Grand Prairie. In many ways, because these were much larger workplaces, they were the real test of the strategy.

Bell Helicopter

The UAW's contract at Bell Helicopter expired in June 1984. The company demanded to change the

COLA formula to quarterly lump sums. Tucker, the bargaining chair and the local president felt that a strike was a bad idea, because Bell's orders were low and the company could have found replacement workers. They had to overcome the resistance of some committee members and the International Rep, who wanted a strike. They developed a solidarity committee of 400 workers (out of 2,800). Workers voted first to reject the contract offer, and then took a second vote on whether to strike or to use the inside strategy. The inside strategy prevailed with a 60% majority.

The solidarity committee put out buttons and t-shirts before the expiration. When the time came the workers were solid. "They began the second best full court press that I've been involved with, Schwitzer being the best," says Tucker. "The Bell workers accepted the premise of no overtime, and not one hour of overtime was worked during that period."

Worker in Trouble—All Workers Assemble

"In the fourth week of the overtime ban," Tucker remembers, "the company grabbed two tool makers and simply said to them, 'You two are going to work this Saturday.' And they said, 'No, we're not.' And the company said, 'Yes, you are.' And they said, 'Nope, we're not.' And the company said, 'Up to the office.'"

"We had created a network of communicators to whom we had issued little metal sports whistles. 'Worker in trouble—all workers assemble' was the slogan. Whenever you hear the whistle, you drop what you're doing and you go to the whistle. So as soon as management started taking these workers up, a worker or two in that area blew the whistles. And whistles started blowing throughout the area, and workers started converging.

"They walked the two workers up to the office area, and maybe two minutes behind them came 500 workers. The two workers were taken up a set of stairs into a balcony set of offices, and at that point the 500 were so intent on rescuing their fellow workers that the Ft. Worth police had to be called to keep them from tearing down Mahogany Row. So the company had to cease and desist for the moment. They begged for peace, the two guys were sent back to their jobs.

"The next morning they sent those two individuals notice that they were not to report or they would be stopped at the guard shack. But we had already anticipated that—we had built our solidarity fund. These were the only two victims in that whole situation and they only lasted a few weeks, so the solidarity fund more than took care of them."

The Lockout Strategy

The company then announced that they were going to discipline anyone who refused overtime.

So the committee adopted what they called the "lockout strategy." When management told an individual to work overtime, everybody else in that area stopped working. When management told them to go back to work, they refused.

The company then started to take people on individually, telling them to work or be disciplined. "We'd given them instructions to tell the company they were going to the union for guidance," says Tucker. "The workers left the plant to come down, and we talked to them for about an hour and told them to go back. Then the company locked everyone out; they just put everybody out of the plant.

"We considered that a major victory. They were locked out, the union was going to pay them strike benefits and insurance benefits. They had done five



good weeks of slowdown. The Fort Worth Star-Telegram had a banner headline the next morning, BELL WORKERS LOCKED OUT, and a picture four inches high, showing three workers, all holding their hands up in the air, walking down the road singing 'Solidarity.'

In its press conferences the union argued that the company was the aggressor. The company had wanted to take away the COLA, the company had locked the workers out. The workers were the underdogs, on the defensive.

Joint Rally of Bell and LTV Workers

The third day after the lockout 1,300 Bell workers went to the LTV facility 15 miles away, with banners, signs and bullhorns. The LTV workers were engaged in their own slowdown. They carried a banner that read "North Texas Solidarity."

It was lunch time at the LTV plant and the LTV workers poured out and met the Bell workers. "It

probably was the most exhilarating of all the moments," Tucker remembers. "It had less to do with the nuts and bolts of how you hurt the company, but it gave another shot of juice to the struggle. For a very brief but shining moment there was a great deal of worker militancy in north Texas. Other plants were getting up on their heels. People were calling me from other unions saying, 'God, what you guys are doing is great, and we're not going to take it any more. We're going to be right there with you.' Even the very, very conservative AFL-CIO central body issued a statement of support. The Steelworkers [who represented other LTV plants] helped the people at LTV by sending in a statement."

Helicopters are required to maintain spare parts in the hangar, even if they are not immediately needed. The union was aware of this pressure on management coming from the customers. They got word that Bell was ready to fold.

"At the same time," says Tucker, "pressure was coming from Detroit." At that time the UAW was making concessions to the auto companies, and Ray Majerus, head of the union's aerospace department, was allowing concessions to be made in other aerospace companies, while Tucker and the LTV and Bell workers were waging a protracted war against concessions. The comparison did not make Majerus or UAW leaders in Detroit look good.

UAW officials in Detroit wanted a settlement, and were willing to concede half the COLA. Tucker tried to convince the bargaining committee to hold out, but could not. The Bell Helicopter workers voted to accept the contract. Tucker believes to this day that they could have won a complete victory.

LTV—The Big One

The inside strategy at LTV Aircraft Products lasted 15 months, ending in a major victory. LTV's three Grand Prairie facilities were building the B-1 bomber, A-12 fighter trainers, and components for commercial airplanes; its aerospace division was very profitable.

The U.S. Defense Department was LTV's ally. It was advising contractors how to get concessions and pushing them to do so. The government's "cost-plus" policy, where a contractor is paid its costs plus a certain specified profit, also aided the company's position.

The union faced several problems because of the nature of the industry and the fact that Texas was a right-to-work state. The committee assumed that if there were a strike, the 1,200 non-union workers would cross the picket line. And many of the 3,800 who belonged to the union were not that union-conscious. In aerospace the workforce is very transient, moving from job to job and company to company as government contracts come and go. While they are working, Tucker explains, they have the attitude "I'm going to get it while I can." So one of the most difficult things to do is cut off overtime."

The company demanded concessions. The union

would not accept them. The contract expired, and the workers went to work without a contract.

LTV cancelled dues checkoff immediately, forcing the union to collect dues by hand. This was a dangerous situation because if the local came to the point of striking, only members who were paid up on their dues would receive strike benefits.

The Solidarity Committee

The LTV solidarity committee began with only 40 people but eventually included four or five hundred active members.

As at Moog and Schwitzer, buttons and weekly leaflets were a big part of the campaign. Many of the leaflets reported on production difficulties. The union also reprinted and handed out favorable newspaper articles from the local press.

Joe Silva, a tool and die maker, explains some of the "creative bottlenecking" that was used by Local 848. "Paperwork, for instance, normal things that the employees would have fixed themselves, they took to the foreman and let him get a backlog of paperwork to correct and to undo, thereby putting a glitch in the flow of productivity. When you do this over a period of time it stacks up. They lost all the backlog that they had, and they started getting worried."

The solidarity committee organized an overtime ban. Joe Silva explains the different sorts of intimidation that management used to try to break the ban. "The immediate supervisors would hold little communications meetings early every morning. 'Hey, you guys need to do something about this and get it settled,' they said. 'You're going to drive the company out of business. You don't know what you're doing. You've lost respect for your jobs. You've lost respect for your company.'

"They started picking out individuals who were vocal and were really supporting the movement. They would intimidate by firing or threatening to fire. They gave white slips. They had a lot of one-on-one sessions with individuals where they said, 'Hey, you've been here a long time and you're a good employee and if you don't straighten up we are going to fire you. And think what you're going to do to your family.' Work you over real good, like a grilling session at the police station."

During the struggle management fired 42 workers for refusing overtime. Silva explains how the workers reacted: "If we knew that they were taking someone up for reprimand or to fire, we closed our tool boxes, and went out in the hall and sang 'Solidarity.' Or we gathered in circles and talked, or maybe did not say anything, but it did play a good head game with supervision. They didn't know what we were going to do next. Then at 11:00 the next morning, if they fired someone, we'd all walk out and go to the hall, and hold a meeting and talk about what do we do next? Do we want to go on with this? How many more do we want to get fired?"

"On about four different occasions where they took individuals up there to fire them, we loaded their

offices up with so many people that they changed their mind about the firing and told us, Hey, just get out of here and go on back to work, we're not going to do anything. We would just all crowd in there, didn't say a word, or maybe we'd sing 'Solidarity' to them. They'd say, What's the matter with these people, holding hands and singing? But then the next day or the next, they eventually did fire them."

It was the solidarity committee's job to convince wavering members to participate. Silva would say, "Brother, you have to do what you have to do. You know what your financial status is, and whether you can support this to the extent that you get fired. If you can't do that, then support all of us in what we're doing. There will be those that will do what needs to be done, but we need your moral support and your financial support."

Skilled Workers on the Tip of the Spear

The company had acted rashly and made a mistake in the first discharges by firing many highly skilled workers. The next group fired were not so highly skilled. The union decided then, says Tucker, that its strategy would be "to put skilled and key workers on the tip of the spear." Those workers would engage in slowdowns but most important, refuse overtime.

"So wherever we had internal confrontations," says Tucker, "we were doing it where the workers were much more valuable. That's a consistent part of the strategy throughout these matters. You find the irreplaceable or key workers."

Eventually the company fired a total of 65 workers, including Joe Silva, and broke the union's overtime ban. "The employer was in a better position, once they cracked the overtime question," says Tucker. "They could simply keep working through the weekends and long hours to compensate for the slowdown. Because the slowdown was having its effect. The company and the government just lied about the B-1, maintaining the facade that everything was on schedule. But our internal intelligence told us that we had thrown them four, five, six planes behind."

"We also knew what was happening with the components that were being built for Boeing, like the 757's and 737's, because we had a pipeline to the Machinists lodge up there. Yes, they said, they were falling behind on the fuselages from LTV."

The Problem of Collecting Dues

The dues issue remained a real problem and had to be tackled, Tucker says. "A lot of them fell far behind in their dues. You're talking about a person who had to pay up ten months of \$30 a month dues. We never did anything punitive about it. We just kept revving the engines of solidarity, and making people feel ashamed. And then we tried one dry run on 'We're going to have to get ready for a strike, let's see where everybody's at,' and that brought about 700 or 800 people up to date."

The hand collection of dues from 3,800 people

was an enormous organizational task. There were 53 elected officials, mostly stewards, and each was assigned a couple of members from the solidarity committee to act as their dues collectors and material distributors. And at the weekly meetings the progress of dues collection was always on the agenda.

At LTV the support system for fired workers, including the solidarity fund, was more refined than in previous struggles. Tucker had warned the members about the inevitable discharges. "By doing that you prepare them, so it doesn't come as such a shock. You make it almost a badge of courage, a badge of honor—you get to be a hero and we collect money for you."

"We set up a victims' group, so we wouldn't let them just filter out into the community. They were blackballed now, as far as going to work at Bell Helicopter or General Dynamics. And it could have been very demoralizing. So we hung them together and made them a very important part of everything. They were at every solidarity meeting. They became built into the struggle. There were about 42 of them that stayed right on the cutting edge."

"The victims themselves did all kinds of events. They also staffed the computers."

"We did all kinds of fundraising," recalls Joe Silva. "We held garage sales, we sold hand-picked pecans and had fish fries and spaghetti dinners. We had barbecues. The guys that were in the plant working would come over at lunch and buy barbecue sandwiches. We did a multitude of things to hold body and soul together."

The inside struggle went on week after week. It became necessary to seek outside support. Rockwell workers in California did plant gate collections. The UAW's Aerospace Department held a national meeting in the Grand Prairie area and brought all the leadership from aerospace locals around the country there, including some Machinists. They held a rally in front of the plant and 2,400 workers came out of the plant at lunchtime to join it.

"The workers marched out of the plant in sort of military style," Tucker remembers. "That looked pretty damned good."

"This thing was taking a very long time. But every time the level of activity would go down a little bit we'd think of some new activity like that."

The LTV stockholders' meeting provided one platform for publicity. "We took the victims to the shareholders' meeting in downtown Dallas," says Tucker. "We had a big picket line out front, and we had wired the reporters up and we made a lot of news. That boosted morale."

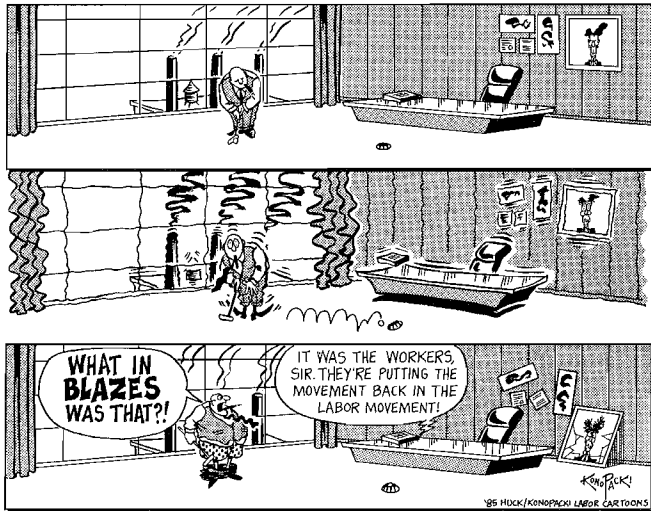
Another technique was to call department meetings. The committee set up a marathon for two weeks, meeting with every department in the plant to keep morale up. And they issued at least one handbill every week, using the International's temporary organizing fund to pay a former local union editor who took leave from another plant.

Between 800 and 1,000 workers were contributing \$5 a week to the solidarity fund. Other workers in the area and around the region were doing the same.

Letters had been written to local unions around the country, and not just UAW locals. The Machinists' Boeing lodge in Seattle, for instance, contributed several thousand dollars. Tucker estimates that three quarters of a million dollars went through the solidarity fund, not including the union strike benefits.

Some of the workers were fired for 13 months, but no worker who requested help lost a home or a car or any major possession. The fund gave them \$199 a week, in addition to the \$100 strike benefits.

Higher-ups in the UAW, Ray Majerus and Regional Director Kenneth Worley, had doubts about the inside strategy. But Tucker was convinced it would



work. "Every day of production that's lost, it takes two to catch back up, that's just a natural law—the day you're producing and the day you're going to have to find. And it can't be done once the worker hunkers down and says, 'I'm committed to not work above a certain pace.' It can't be done unless the company can break the back of the slowdown.

"The company may be in this for some perverse corporate ideology. It may be the fruits of Reaganism. But at some point, no matter how the company wants to rationalize it, they are not getting productivity, and they have to make a decision."

Setting a Strike Date

"We got to the point where finally," says Tucker, "this company was really beginning to choke. But they just absolutely, for whatever peculiar reason, refused to yield. Maybe it was corporate ego." The committee decided to set a strike date. They collected back dues, as much as 12 months' dues at a time. The money rolled in and enthusiasm was high.

But at just that moment, says Tucker, higher-ups in the UAW reached a secret agreement with the company for a concession contract. Tucker refused to go along with the deal.

"At midnight we shut the plant down. Six hundred people showed up for initial picket duty on a Saturday night. And in three minutes the mediator came to me and said, 'Management wants to talk to you.'

"So by two something in the morning, they had agreed to reinstate the COLA fully and to eliminate their proposal on the two-tier wage. There were very modest improvements on the health care.

"And we got all 65 workers back with back pay. They got all but three months' pay, the company insisted and we recognized that they had in fact received a lot of supplemental money.

"The settlement at LTV came the first of July of 1985 and it was a glorious settlement. The workers felt so good and strong, and that corporation clearly felt genuine long-term impact.

"Because they had been taken to the baptismal font and had a lesson in what could happen. They had seen the other side, not business unionism, but something better."

★ ★ ★

After the inside strategy was developed by UAW members in Region 5, it was taken up by workers in other unions as well. It may, therefore, have lost some of its novelty and its surprise attack quality. Management has been alerted to the strategy and may be better prepared for it.

In addition, a legal decision in 1986 said that in the event of a lockout employers may hire temporary replacements.² Obviously, this makes the lockout and replace strategy more attractive to management.

For these two reasons alone, anyone planning on using the inside strategy has to think carefully about the implications.

The answers to the questions below are in the hands of the workers. The leaders of an inside strategy must ask them again and again, because in a protracted struggle the relationships will change and the answers to the questions will change.

The key is timing, knowing when to attack and when to retreat and when to stand still. Having a large solidarity committee to plan with will give the key decision-makers a better chance of timing their actions for the best possible moment.

Action Questions

The initial discussion of these issues should be discreet. You might want to limit it to a few trusted union members.

1. What is the economic situation of your company? Of your plant? Do you have any trusted friend in management or an office worker who can get you information about management's plans for the future? Who are its suppliers? Who are its customers? Where do its orders stand? Who has power in the corporation and in this location?

2. Why are you thinking of using an inside strategy? How will the members relate to the idea of an inside strategy instead of a strike? Is there a history of work-to-rules or slowdowns?

3. Where will your core group come from? The executive board? The stewards? A committee created for this purpose? Who are the members who can be developed as leaders in a new situation? Who are the

two or three key people you must talk to? Who are the next five people you must talk to? Who are the next five? Who should talk to whom?

4. How's your timing? Get out a calendar and check the vacation schedule—will all your key people be there when you need them? Look at management's production schedule or crunch times—when can you hurt them most?

5. What is the production process in your plant? (You might want to make a map.) What are the most crucial operations? What are the key departments in the plant? What are the key machines in those departments? What would it take to stop those machines? Who fixes them? What are the key links between departments? Where are the potential bottlenecks? Which workers have jobs which allow them to travel around from one department to another? Is there one group of workers that is particularly powerful if they impede production? Is there any group of workers who because of their skills or experience are difficult to replace? Which workers are most vulnerable and need most protection?

6. Do you have ties to unions at your company's supplier plants? At customers? Would they be willing to raise their quality standards for your company's product? Do you have ties to the unions of the truck drivers, railroad workers or others who move your parts or finished products? Can you establish ties with those workers that can make life more difficult for your company? How does it affect production if raw materials or parts arrive late? How do your customers react if your production schedules are not met?

7. What will you ask people to commit themselves to? How will you establish your solidarity committee?

8. What activities should you begin with? File group grievances? Work to rule? Slow down? What about lunchtime meetings or rallies? Will you have buttons? Leaflets?

9. What kind of support can you expect from the union's District or Region office? From the International? What kind of funds do you have or can you raise?

Notes

1. Legal Note: When a contract expires workers may go on strike to enforce the union's bargaining position. But if workers continue to work during negotiations, with certain exceptions past practices and terms of the old contract must continue in effect during bargaining. As long as workers work, the wages and working conditions must stay the same. The NLRB reasons that it would demonstrate bad faith to allow the employer to change wages at will at the same time it is bargaining. *NLRB v Katz*, 369 US 736, 82 S Ct 1107 (1962).

If negotiations reach impasse, the parties may refuse to bargain further on the deadlocked issues, *Cheney California Lumber Co v NLRB*, 319 F2d 375, 53 LRRM 2598 (CA9, 1963), and the company may unilaterally impose new wages or contract modifications. What it imposes must be consistent with its last demand to the union. *Bi-Rite Foods, Inc.*, 147 NLRB 59, 56 LRRM 1150 (1964). If impasse is broken, say by a retreat of one party from its demands, the obligation to bargain resumes. *Transport Co of Texas*, 175 NLRB 763, 71 LRRM 1085 (1969).

"Impasse" is a slippery term, and the NLRB and courts may interpret it differently. *Taft Broadcasting Co*, 163 NLRB 475, 64 LRRM 1386 (1967), enfd sub nom *AFTRA v NLRB*, 395 F2d 622, 67 LRRM 3032 (CA9, 1968).

One of the exceptions to the continuation of old contract terms is that the company may discontinue check-off and union security. *Bethlehem Steel Co*, 136 NLRB 1500, 1502, 50 LRRM 1013 (1962), aff'd in pertinent part, *Marine Workers v NLRB*, 320 F2d 615, 53 LRRM 2878 (CA3, 1963), cert denied 375 US 984 (1964).

After contract expiration the company may also refuse to arbitrate grievances over working conditions or discipline. *Indiana & Michigan Electric Co*, 284 NLRB # 7, 125 LRRM 1097 (1987); but see *Nolde Brothers v Bakery Workers Local 358*, 430 US 243, 97 S Ct 1067 (1977); *NLRB v Litton Financial Printing Division*, 893 F2d 1128, 133 LRRM 2354 (CA9, 1990). Arbitration is considered to stand in place of economic power, the NLRB reasons. So if the union can strike, the employer should not have to arbitrate.

2. Legal Note: Unless there is specific evidence of antiunion employer animosity, the company can hire temporary replacement workers in a lockout. *Harter Equipment*, 280 NLRB # 71, 122 LRRM 1219 (1986), enfd sub nom *Operating Engineers v NLRB*, 829 F2d 458, 126 LRRM 2337 (CA3, 1987). The legality of an offensive lockout followed by permanent replacement of workers has not been decided. Presumably the NLRB would not allow it.

In a few states a locked-out worker can collect unemployment benefits, but most states disallow benefits. See *Smith v MESCO*, 410 Mich 231, 301 NW2d 285 (1981) (collecting cases).

Corporate Campaigns 13.

As union members in the 1980s looked for new weapons, they not only rediscovered their power on the shop floor (the “inside strategy” we discussed in the previous chapter), they also discovered the power they had in the broader society, power that could be applied to corporations’ weak points. This type of weapon is called a corporate campaign.

What makes corporate campaigns unique is that they focus on the conflicting interests that inevitably exist within a complex business organization and between the target company and other businesses. Sometimes the campaign will personalize the enemy by focusing on specific management figures or board members, holding individuals responsible for corporate practices.

Corporate campaigns also draw on the corporation’s financial, environmental, civil rights, community relations, and investment practices. Bad social practices common to many businesses, such as investments in South Africa, toxic dumping, or racial discrimination are fair game. As Charles Perry writes in *Union Corporate Campaigns*, they “seize the high ground” and attempt to redefine the issues beyond the initial labor-management dispute. They have a populist dimension that draws attention to corporate abuses of the community and focuses on unpopular institutions like banks or insurance companies.

Corporate campaigns are not simply public relations stunts. Those campaigns that have been limited to publicity techniques have not accomplished much. Campaigns are effective when they inflict costly consequences on the target company or its allies.

The ability of the union to do this, in turn, depends on active support beyond the union membership. A well-organized corporate campaign involves mass mobilization. The union members become organizers, not only of their fellow workers, but of members of other unions and various community groups. As this tactic has come into wider use, new and old methods of popular mobilization, fundraising, and

coalition building have come into play.

Even when a full-blown corporate campaign is not attempted, some local unions are incorporating aspects of this tactic into their strike strategy. The strikers at Watsonville Canning in 1985-87, for example, picketed Wells Fargo Bank, the company’s major financial backer, asking local unions throughout northern California to withdraw funds. Wells Fargo refused to roll over the company’s debt, forcing it out of business, and then financed a reorganization under new ownership. This was one factor that led to a favorable settlement for the thousand strikers.

Some companies are more vulnerable to publicity and public opinion than others. Public institutions like schools and hospitals, services like hotels and restaurants, industries under public scrutiny like nuclear power or genetic engineering may be particularly susceptible to media coverage.

Both public institutions and private companies are subject to all sorts of laws and regulations, from the Securities and Exchange Commission to the Occupational Safety and Health Act, from the Civil Rights Act to the local fire codes. *Every law or regulation is a potential net in which management can be snared and entangled.* A complaint to a regulatory agency can cause the company managerial time, public embarrassment, potential fines, and the costs of compliance. One well-placed phone call can do a lot of damage.

Management’s kind of power requires that it be the ultimate authority in the workplace. But the union can challenge that authority by pointing out that there are other authorities: a local priest, minister or rabbi can ask to talk to management about the congregation’s concerns about the company. The NAACP or NOW may want to talk to the company about its equal employment opportunity policy. Greenpeace may be concerned about toxic dumping, or the local block club may want to stop the company’s trucks from driving down the side streets at night. A Congressperson may visit the agency to find out how the taxpayers’ dol-

lars are being spent, or an alderperson may want to know if the company has kept the promises it made when it got that tax abatement. *When other authorities are brought in, management's weight is diminished, and the union's weight is relatively greater.*

The corporate campaign is a young tactic, with only a little more than a decade of use. It is not always successful. It is clear, for example, that it usually takes time. It is not a quick fix. Nor is it necessarily a substitute for more traditional labor tactics such as the strike. Often, it is run alongside a strike and uses traditional methods of mobilization as well.

In spite of their experimental nature, corporate campaigns were used effectively throughout the 1980s, and in several cases forced corporations to yield ground. Even where they lost, as in UFCW Local P-9's fight against Hormel, the campaigns contributed to the labor movement's understanding of how to use this strategy. We will be looking here at two somewhat different models of corporate campaigns, one developed by Ray Rogers of Corporate Campaign, Inc. and the other used by the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers.

Basics of a Corporate Campaign

Ray Rogers first used the term "corporate campaign" to describe the strategy he developed in the late 1970s when the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers (ACTWU) tried to organize several J.P. Stevens plants in the South. Since then Rogers and his organization, Corporate Campaign, Inc., have conducted campaigns for several unions, including: the Farm Labor Organizing Committee in its fight with Campbell; United Food and Commercial Workers Local P-9 at Hormel's Austin, Minnesota plant; the Paperworkers at International Paper Co.; and the flight attendants' unions at American Airlines and Eastern Air Lines. Here Rogers first explains the fundamentals of a corporate campaign, and then we look at how that approach was used against J.P. Stevens and Hormel.¹

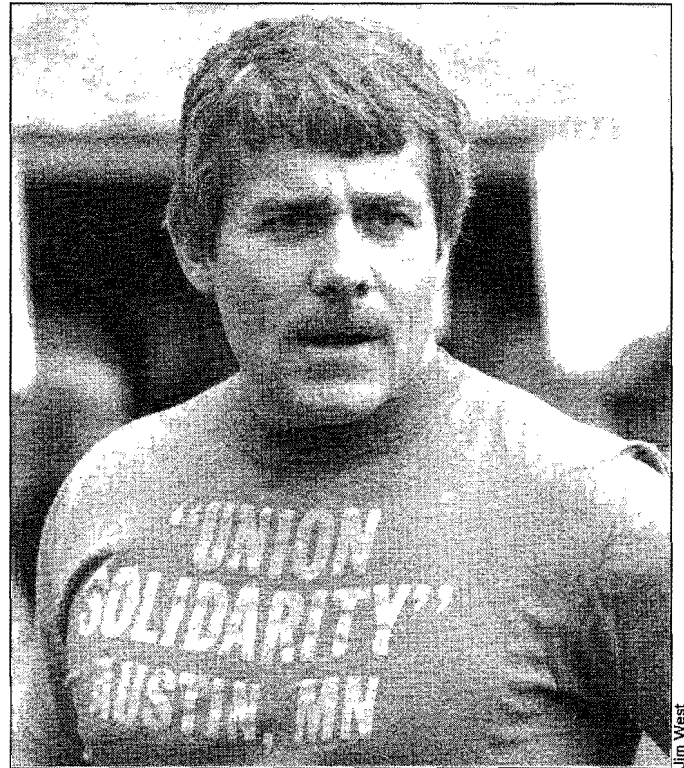
The first step in a corporate campaign, says Rogers, is an analysis of the corporation. Most people looking at the corporation see a single unified entity. Rogers analytically dissolves it into its constituent parts. "I would define a corporation," says Rogers, "as a coalition of individual and institutional interests, some more vital and vulnerable than others, that can be challenged, attacked, divided and conquered."

"What makes up a company?" asks Rogers. "Is it bricks, mortar and machinery? Do bricks, mortar and machinery make decisions and set policies that hurt workers and their communities? No, people do. Thus we must personalize our campaign, which means we have to identify those personalities. Then we must identify those individuals who can exert the greatest influence over the policies of the company."

Rogers explains what he calls a "specialized economic and political power analysis": "I look at all the members of the board of directors, the top

management. I research them thoroughly so that I understand how much power and influence they really wield in terms of the other institutions they're tied into, their political connections, etc. Then I lay everything out on a chart. And I begin to get a picture of who really wields the power within that board of directors, either as individuals, or as individuals representing institutions.

"Next we develop a campaign strategy that has a



Ray Rogers.

beginning point A and an end point Z. Point Z is total defeat or annihilation of your adversary." In reality, few, if any, campaigns reach point Z. "You have got to develop a campaign such that you feel totally confident that if you can proceed from Point A towards Point Z, somewhere between A and Z there is a breaking point or point of compromise, a Point C. But there has to be the escalation of the fight, you have to be able to create more tension.

"The next step is to identify the power that can carry out the plan. This power is based on people and money. Who can be mobilized? Are there unions or community groups who can join demonstrations? Are there organizations that can invest or withdraw significant sums of money?

"Where do my allies, the unions and community groups, have their bank accounts? Where do they have their insurance policies? Where do they have their stock proxies?

"And part of your planning had better be, how can we raise money? Because it costs money to print literature, to travel, to make phone calls, to set up an office.

"In all of this you have to solidify your internal

organization. You have to make sure that people understand the kind of fight they're embarking on and what it's going to take to mount a credible battle.

"Now, I've got a strategy, all these people to contact. How do I relay a message to them that there are some serious issues? I want to persuade them through moral suasion, because they know it would be the right thing to do. But I also have to think of ways to appeal to people on the basis of self-interest. So you have to put together leaflets and brochures that you can distribute by the tens and hundreds of thousands.

"When we put out a brochure, we may have a labor fight with a company, but we'll also talk about the company's environmental problems, their links to South Africa, their violations of equal rights, you name it. We hang out all the dirty linen, because we're helping to build allies and making people realize that this isn't only a labor struggle, it goes much further."

In your basic literature, says Rogers, it is important to give people a way to get involved. "We explain how people can help, whether it's by contributing money, ordering more leaflets to help distribute, setting up a support group, setting up a press conference, writing letters, committing to pull money out of a financial institution, or turning over proxy votes. There's a lot of people out there who really want to help you, but you've got to tell them how.

"Now you've got to start sending that literature out through mailing lists, get on that phone, and start mobilizing economic and political pressure against those targets.

"You've also got to constantly strengthen the internal organization of the union in terms of identifying new leaders. The union leaders on the executive board are going to call the shots, but they better figure out how to allocate responsibility and involve the members in all elements of the campaign; otherwise there is just too much work to do. If you've got 4,000 volunteers, and you've got enough work for 4,000, then you'll create enough work for another thousand, another thousand, another thousand. That's a good campaign: the more work you do, the more work you create."

It is important to understand what a corporate campaign is *not*, says Rogers. It is not, he insists, about harassing or embarrassing a corporation, as some journalists or labor leaders seem to think. "You cannot harass and embarrass these powerful business and financial leaders into doing something that they believe is going to cost them millions of dollars, and is opposed to their primary self-interest. The only way you can force them to do something like that is to raise the stakes economically and politically for them so that it is no longer in their interest to deny you justice. You have to deal with real economic and political power and pressure; it cannot be symbolic."

Some people think of the corporate campaign as a fight over stockholders' proxies or drives to force banks to remove funds from a particular corporation. But Rogers stresses that a good strategy is multifaceted, taking place both in the streets and in the boardrooms. For example, as described later on, at

Local P-9 the corporate campaign mobilized thousands of members and supporters in picketing, leafleting, rallies, and civil disobedience.

J.P. Stevens—The Cotton Mill Crusade

In 1976 the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers enlisted Rogers to help organize a nationwide boycott against J.P. Stevens, a giant textile firm. J.P. Stevens had fought the union tooth and nail as it tried to organize in the South, and had been found guilty of 111 labor law violations. ACTWU was trying to force the company to sign a contract.

"In the case of Stevens," says Rogers, "we are talking initially about just seven plants in North Carolina, seven out of about 85 plants. There were 3,000 workers out of about 40,000 workers total. So there wasn't even a question that there could be a strike. If the union got enough workers to do something crazy and shut down one or two plants, they would simply close the plants and transfer the work, pit one plant off against another.

"I also realized that there was no way that you could ever beat Stevens simply through a consumer boycott. Less than one-third of all Stevens products were reachable through a consumer boycott. There were so many names it was hard for even the most ardent boycott supporter to identify them. And the laws were such you had to be very careful in terms of how you went about organizing a boycott. Everything was stacked against the union being able to win through that kind of a program.

"So I put a big circle in a middle of a chart," says Rogers, "and I drew arrows coming into the circle from every conceivable angle. I would try to figure out every way that I could place real relentless economic and political pressure on J.P. Stevens."

Interlocking Directorships

That analysis revealed that through interlocking boards of directors, Stevens was closely associated with a number of other corporations, including Avon and Sperry-Rand. But the most important corporate and financial backers of Stevens, says Rogers, were the banks and insurance companies: Manufacturer's Hanover, Seamen's Bank, New York Life Insurance and Metropolitan Life Insurance. Except for Metropolitan Life, each of these corporations had one of their board members on the board of J.P. Stevens. Metropolitan Life was Stevens' major source of financial backing. Rogers determined that the insurance companies would be key to weakening J.P. Stevens.

Rogers believed that if he could force the representatives of these companies to resign from the Stevens board, and the Stevens board members to resign from these companies, he would be undermining the economic foundations of J.P. Stevens.

Then began the campaign for support from other AFL-CIO unions and from the labor movement's traditional allies in the civil rights and

women's movements. The plight of J.P. Stevens' Southern workers, most of them Black women, was widely publicized. Thousands of unionists, civil rights activists, and feminists wrote letters to banks and insurance companies. They demanded that these institutions sever their ties with the notorious lawbreaker and union-buster. Demonstrations and press conferences were held, celebrities were enlisted. Unions and other organizations were prepared to remove their funds from banks and other financial institutions if the company called their bluff. ACTWU took 700 union supporters to a Sperry stockholders meeting, including Crystal Lee Sutton, the "real Norma Rae." The union was able to get the New York public pension funds to cast some 650,000 votes against the Stevens official seeking re-election to the Sperry-Rand board.

"In 1978 the first resignations took place," Rogers remembers. "Two of Stevens' top officials, including its chairman, were forced off the board of Manufacturers' Hanover Trust Company, the fourth largest bank in the country. How did that happen? Is it because a few people went over to the bank and said, 'Look, bank, we're going to protest these links if you don't get them off your board?' They laugh at you. I had found unions that were willing to support me, and other groups. As *Newsweek* reported, I had one bank facing a \$2 billion pull-out of union and other funds. But what that bank was facing was not just a \$2 billion pull-out of moneys; the bank had been drawn into a conflict that was undermining the reputation it had spent millions of dollars and many years to build.

"A couple of weeks later the chief executive of Avon resigned from J.P. Stevens. Then some months after that the chief executive of New York Life, at that time the fourth largest insurance company in the country, and the chief executive from Stevens resigned from each other's boards—24 hours after the head of New York Life said such resignations would never take place."

Feeling the pressure, in October 1979 Seamen's Bank Chairman E. Virgil Conway asked to meet with ACTWU President Murray Finley. Conway pledged to do everything in his power to get meaningful negotiations between Stevens and the union.

Insurance Companies Key

However, as Rogers had determined early on, the key to beating Stevens was the insurance companies. New York Life, Metropolitan and Equitable controlled between 70 and 80 percent of Stevens' long-term debt. ACTWU now began to insinuate that unions and their members might sever their relationships with these companies. The unions had real power here—billions of dollars in pension funds, billions more in the union members' individual insurance policies. Nominally, policyholders are the owners of insurance companies, and Rogers suggested that the union might attempt to run its own candidates for their boards of directors. It would have cost the companies millions of dollars just to mail out ballots for such elections. On September 25, 1980 ACTWU re-

quested access to Metropolitan Life's policyholder list.

Five days later Metropolitan Life President Richard Shinn met with ACTWU President Murray Finley. Shinn assured Finley that Stevens would reach a quick settlement. The cotton mill crusade came to an end. The union had won.

Summarizing the experience in the *New York Times*, A.H. Raskin wrote, "Pressure on giant banks and insurance companies and other Wall Street pillars, all aimed at isolating Stevens from the financial community, helped generate a momentum toward settlement that could not be achieved through the 1976-80 worldwide boycott of Stevens products or through more conventional uses of union muscle such as strikes and mass picketing."

The Corporate Campaign Evolves —Hormel

In the corporate campaign and strike against Hormel Co. in 1984-86, any pressure brought by Hormel's allied financial institutions turned out not to be decisive. Still, the vast array of tactics used by UFCW Local P-9 set an example for the rest of the labor movement. If P-9 had received support from the UFCW International instead of sabotage, its campaign might well have won. We will not attempt the full story of the P-9 strike here, which has been written about extensively elsewhere.² Here we will look only at P-9's outreach and support organizations.

The plant in Austin, Minnesota is Hormel's flagship plant. Local P-9 began to prepare for a strike there almost a year before its contract expired in September 1985. When Hormel demanded that all its plants in "the chain" open their contracts and take a pay cut from \$10.69 to \$8.75, P-9 refused, but Hormel imposed the cut anyway. Believing itself to be the local in the best position to resist concessions, P-9 hired Ray Rogers to help set up a campaign.

Even before Rogers and his partner Ed Allen arrived in Austin, Local P-9 prepared its members for a prolonged struggle by bringing each and every decision about the tactics to be used to the union membership. This included the decision to hire Corporate Campaign, Inc. in the first place and later the decision to levy the membership to finance the start of the campaign. The inclusion of the rank and file in all the decisions helped the local to present Rogers with the willing troops the campaign required.

In October 1984 the Austin United Support Group was organized by the spouses of P-9 members. They held nightly meetings attended by over a hundred people. At these meetings, volunteers were recruited and tasks distributed after reports on the progress of strike preparations and later the strike itself were given. The Support Group administered the many strike support programs at the Austin Labor Center and later, when the UFCW International removed P-9 from the hall, at their own building down the street. This organization outlasted the strike and

still exists.

The Austin Labor Center, where Local P-9 had its office, was turned into the strike center, open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Meals were served in the basement and food was distributed weekly to union members. There was a "Tool Box Committee" which helped members deal with financial, legal, and personal problems, referring them to social service agencies. Before Christmas, the hall housed "Santa's Workshop" where strikers' families and supporters made toys.

P-9's outreach program was formidable. The union published a weekly newspaper, *The Unionist*, and put out special editions to answer the questions of people in the community. The paper talked about the connections between Hormel and First Bank; the bank was attacked for not investing in the region and for foreclosing on family farms. Hormel was shown to be a profitable company more than able to pay a decent wage. Later issues talked about the horrendous health and safety conditions in the plant.

Caravans Throughout the Midwest

Most important, strikers travelled throughout the Midwest and eventually nationwide to expand

their base of support. They went first of all to other Hormel plants. "The local organized caravans with as many as 350 people to go out on the road and into each community where there was a plant," says Ray Rogers. "We slept in tents and on union hall floors. We would be at plant gates at five in the morning and then go door-to-door to canvass every home in the community." In this way some 500,000 pieces of literature were distributed.

The early literature asked for help in putting economic pressure on Hormel and First Bank. When P-9 caravans arrived at a town, they would picket the First Bank branch and talk to local reporters, and then visit unions and go door-knocking. "Millions of dollars of deposits were pulled out of First Bank," says Rogers.

But the campaign against First Bank did not produce sufficient pressure on Hormel. Rogers was not able to get large unions to withdraw funds as they had during the Stevens campaign. Once the UFCW and the AFL-CIO went public with their opposition to P-9 in January and February 1986, all hope for this type of corporate campaign disappeared.

In January, Hormel decided to re-open the Austin plant with scabs. Minnesota Governor Rudy Perpich enforced the decision by sending in the National Guard. The strikers and many supporters faced the



UFCW Local P-9 demonstration at Banks of Iowa, a chain being absorbed by the First Bank System.

Guard nonviolently, but were attacked as Guardsmen escorted scabs through the picket line. The vision of club-wielding National Guardsmen attacking strikers in an obscure prairie town beamed across the nation on the evening news.

P-9, now seasoned by months of activity, responded with mass civil disobedience at the Hormel plant and roving pickets at other Hormel plants in the Midwest. Seventy-five Austin strikers travelled by car to Hormel's Ottumwa, Iowa plant. Most of the Ottumwa workers respected the line, as did truck drivers. Not all of the roving pickets were as successful, but the actions represented an escalation of the struggle.

The corporate campaign now centered on a boycott of Hormel products. The First Bank campaign had been essentially regional, but the boycott provided a means of activating support around the entire country. Again, massive mailings went out from Austin to unions, churches, and community groups of all kinds. The literature tied Hormel's disastrous health and safety record to the quality of its products, suggesting that not everything in Spam came from a hog. As with the First Bank campaign, the boycott never seemed to really hurt highly profitable Hormel, but it did help create one of the most amazing mobilizations of national support for a local labor struggle that the country had seen in years.

The mailings, rallies and boycott activities in the winter and spring of 1986 had the desired results. First hundreds, then thousands of letters of support poured into Austin from unions and individuals across the country. Typical was a letter from two UFCW members in Nashville, who wrote: "P-9 has opened our eyes; when we came here [to an Austin rally] we told our husbands that we wanted to be with those people because they are fighting." With the letters and rallies came money.

Adopt a Family

The strikers created a very broad base of financial support with their "Adopt a Family" program. Local unions were asked to pledge to support an individual family for the duration of the strike, thus making the strike more personal for its supporters. "We had the families write to the unions that were adopting them," Rogers remembers, "and send pictures, and keep them up to date with the struggle. It was totally run by strikers and strike supporters."

With "Adopt a Family" every striking family had an economic base of \$600 a month to meet their mortgages and car payments. The Emergency and Hardship Fund helped those with specific problems. Rogers says, "We started sending out fundraising mailings just as the strike began. We raised financial support from unions in all 50 states and from another ten countries outside the United States. We raised in actual cash well over a million dollars before it was over."

The United Support Group provided much of the labor and administration for this crucial fundraising. They also published a monthly newsletter, the *Support Report*, that went to all those who had con-

tributed to the various support programs. The newsletter kept thousands of supporters abreast of strike, boycott, and support developments and an amazing variety of related political and legal developments, linking P-9's supporters to the hub of the national campaign.

Teams of P-9 members were dispatched to all parts of the country and P-9 support and boycott offices were set up in a few cities. Food caravans were organized out of midwest cities, particularly Minneapolis and St. Paul. Rallies drawing unionists from across the country were used to solidify and expand support. Jesse Jackson was invited to Austin and spoke there in April 1986. The National Organization for Women endorsed the P-9 boycott. Native American activists supported the strike. Farmers groups rallied to the workers' cause. Even a representative of the African National Congress came to Austin, to attend the dedication to Nelson Mandela of a mural painted on an outside wall of the Austin Labor Center.

What began as a fight against concessions by one local union in one industry became a rallying point for tens of thousands of frustrated union members across the country. The P-9ers, of course, were not the first to resist concessions. But, with the help of Corporate Campaign, Inc. and their own tight infrastructure of supporting organizations, they had taken their fight to others facing the same problems and gotten an enormous response. By the time Local P-9 was placed in trusteeship in June 1986, it had received financial contributions from 3,000 unions and other organizations. For a time, they had caught the imagination of labor's grass roots.

Nevertheless, the open hostility of the UFCW leadership and thus the AFL-CIO top leadership succeeded in breaking the strike. "There is only one thing that saved Hormel," says Rogers, "and it wasn't the National Guard. It was the the International union. When I think of the amount of resources and the time, the divisions they created to undercut everything we did. Without them, I think we could have beat the Guard, we could have beat the police, we would have had that company."

Knowledge Empowers Workers

Richard Leonard is Special Projects Director for the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers; for about seven years he has overseen many of that union's corporate campaigns. In developing strategies, Leonard places emphasis on the workers' knowledge of their plant.

"The thing that empowers workers," says Leonard, "is knowledge. What we do is based on the notion that the workers know as much if not more about the company than management does, at least at that location. If you can collect this knowledge, it can work miracles. I've seen it happen over and over again."

To begin, says Leonard, "I'll do a couple of hours of corporate research: annual reports, 10-K's,

newspaper articles, database. Generally I'll begin with the 10-K corporate report and some of the SEC [Securities and Exchange Commission] documents which are easy to obtain. We subscribe to DIALOG, which is a database of maybe 800 other databases, and we'll look at some of the stuff put out by Disclosure [an information service], basically to find out who the major shareholders are, company insiders, institutions. One database is Spectrum, which is simply an arrangement of information on shareholder data showing who the players are. [See Appendix B for more on how to use these tools.]

"We take a look at some major articles that have appeared in the popular business press in the last couple of years. That will be on data base. *Fortune*, *Wall Street Journal*. Get a sense of where the company's come from. Try to find out something on the temperament of key top managers and maybe something about the strategic mission of the plant or division. Maybe we'll find out where else they're organized and what's going down there. Make a few phone calls to some other people, find out what's going on. That's stage one. Now get with the workers."

The Group Interview

The next step is to go to the local union membership. "I'll go in and meet with the committee for a few hours," Leonard says, "find out what I can about the dispute at hand and what seems to be hanging it up. What is management's attitude? What is it they're after? How much do they want? What are the stakes?"

"You've got to know if you're up against top-level corporate policy, or whether the problem was instigated by a single manager or a clique of managers at the top level, an intermediate level or locally. A lot of times problems are caused by just one or two managers who are, as we call it, 'freelancing'—that is, grabbing whatever they can in order to put a feather in their cap.

"Then I'll set up a series of meetings. Get people from all phases of the enterprise: production, maintenance, drivers, warehousemen, lab, clerical, and get as many of them as you can together in a room. And you interview them as a group. It's very infectious, after an hour or two they get pretty worked up realizing how much they know about the boss.

"Sometimes you get a large group together and they're only available for a few hours on a few nights, and you have to go through it rather fast. On the other hand, if they're locked out or on strike, they've got lots of time on their hands." Then, such an interview may run for three eight-hour days.

"Then you have to go through with smaller groups of people later on, in particular departments. And if something comes up that's interesting, one person will go off and interview other people."

Leonard has developed a detailed outline to use in conducting group interviews (see the questionnaire in Appendix A). He explains the procedure:

"Start with a plant history. Does anyone have an aerial photo or a scale drawing of the facility?

Blueprint? Most plants have them and the workers can get them.

"When has the company expanded? Where and how? Expansion plans' projected cost. Information on previous owners and their backgrounds. Workers often have scrapbooks. If you get into a group of a hundred or more workers, one of them has a scrapbook at home where he has saved every newspaper article about the company. Get a complete collection of all company newsletters. Stuff posted on bulletin boards. Monthly magazines by the company. There's always a pack rat in every group. They have photographs of officers and managers, statements you can hold their feet to the fire on.

"Get them to describe the area, the neighborhood, the residential areas, the nearest schools, the nearest other factories. The perceptions of neighbors regarding risks of the plant, previous histories of fires, explosions. Does the neighborhood perceive itself at risk? What about plant security? Condition of the fences? Does your plant or neighborhood have an evacuation plan? What kind of historical relationship exists between the neighborhood and the plant? What community groups in this vicinity have gripes against the company: religious groups, neighborhood groups, environmental groups, ethnic groups, preservationist groups? What kind of groups are outspoken in this area? League of Women Voters? Environmentalists? Social justice groups? People know these things. They don't know them intimately. But they know of them. And you get fifty people together, they know, collectively.

"Basically, you're doing an *inventory of social costs*. You're trying to find out where there are external costs of production that have been foisted off on the community. Maybe the plant was built without permits and money went under the table so they could do this. Workers know these things.

"They start realizing, hey, we know a lot about this company, things they wouldn't want other people to know. They've really ripped off the taxpayers here. They've ripped off the utility companies, they've ripped off the environment. They've really ripped off the neighborhood. They've even ripped off the company and the shareholders.

"I can tell you, within two hours of any interview I've ever been in, workers are jumping up and down because all of a sudden they realize the company is screwing over other people too. Why haven't we brought this to anybody's attention? How can they take us for granted? How can they be screwing us over when we know all of these things, when they depend on us to carry out their dirty deeds?"

After or during the period that the group interviews are taking place, the workers can also begin to do research themselves, by going to local agencies, talking to other workers, or talking to supervisors. "Supervisors and workers are not that far apart," Leonard says, "aside from being on the opposite side of the bargaining table. A lot of your supervisors were at one point workers. And a lot of these guys socialize together over the years. And then management,

higher up, decides to kick the workers' ass, and all of a sudden the supervisors and workers are not even talking. But they have been talking, for years. They've been sharing information about mismanagement, waste, supervisory theft and other screw-ups. One plant manager had his workers build him a big houseboat inside his plant."

Looking for Victims

Even as you are gathering information, says Leonard, you are beginning to develop a strategy. "Some things that could be very useful will immediately become apparent, and some which will be of use over the longer term. But you are usually overwhelmed with more things to do than you have time to do them. You are presented with quite a menu of organizing tools.

"You do not make any secret of the fact that you are gathering this information, either. If you have fifty people in the meeting, you've probably got at least three who will leak this back to the company. That's fine, let the company know what we're doing. You hope that the mere process of gathering the information in an organized way will get the company scurrying back to the table.

"They may realize that if they have made an enemy of the workers, then *the enemy is running the plant*. They may decide, maybe we ought to get straight with these guys before things get out of hand." Given corporate managers' arrogance, this usually doesn't happen.

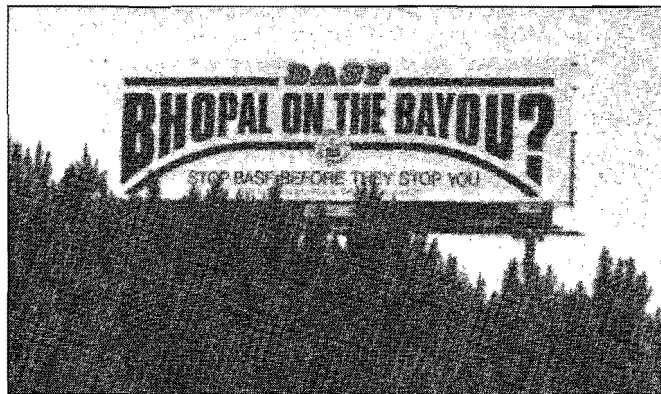
"You are really looking to tap the workers' knowledge of the production process. This process produces a lot of things besides products," Leonard stresses. "*You are looking at other groups of people who have been victimized by the company*. Sometimes it can be a neighborhood, it can be taxpayers, it can be ratepayers in the utility system.

"You're looking at how you can build a wider circle of friends in the community. Sometimes these groups are very well organized: environmental groups, civil rights groups. South Africa is always present. A lot of people will immediately look at the company's record in the Third World. We don't usually go that far afield, usually we start right around the location there.

"Our preference is always to avoid bringing in the top corporate levels if at all possible. We try to keep it to that plant location. If you've caught them in a screw-up, the local management will want to avoid seeing it go higher up too. Because lower level management is under pressure to improve financial numbers, they'll go after the weakest link in their cost structure, i.e., labor. So, much of the aggression against workers originates with lower level and local management. Broad-sides against a billion-dollar corporation can lead to a very protracted situation.

"There are all kinds of people who can be victims, not just folks in the local community. You can have suppliers that are being screwed. You can have customers that are getting product that is

shortweighted or off-spec. Workers know. They do quality control. They know when they make a tank car full of alcohol that's no good—and they know when the boss comes along and says, ship it anyway. They can look at the bill, they can figure out who it's going to. They can save this information for later, or they can jump up and down every day at supervision and



OCAW billboard on I-10.

say, you're jeopardizing this business. Or they can let it go through and then inform the customer later on that they got screwed. There's a lot of power in this."

Leonard says that the victims can even include the stockholders and the banks. While these are not allies in the same sense as the community, they may be useful short-term allies in putting pressure on management.

Organizing Us and Disorganizing Them

"A part of what a corporate campaign does is not only to organize on our side, but to disorganize management," says Leonard. "Companies are by definition organized. They operate by command, and if you don't follow the company line as a manager, you're out. For them it's 'solidarity or else.' They spend their time essentially disorganizing the workforce.

"Especially among front line supervision. They go one-on-one with our people and try to engender distrust in the union agenda and their leadership, and in the importance of various items in the contract. They'll suggest that the union leadership isn't properly motivated, that they're not democratic, that all the orders are coming out of some distant city where the union headquarters is at, or that the maintenance people are running the local, or that the Blacks are in charge. They have an array of tactics that they use almost instinctively to try to disorganize and confuse us.

"When we turn their tactics around and disorganize management, we find that as this takes place, it has the reverse effect of organizing ourselves. As the workers realize how they can use their very intimate knowledge of that plant to create the same level of confusion on the other side, that process has the effect of organizing the workers.

"There are two things that drive any organization: institutional objectives and the personal ambi-

tions of its leaders. The second often operates at cross-purposes with the first. This is a factor that needs to be thoroughly understood and capitalized on. I think that it is a mistake to focus more than half your attention on corporate finances when there are so many individuals within a company who are willing to misuse this money to advance (or protect) their career ambitions.

"What you have, then, are a number of managers who may be out of step with workers, communities, customers and even corporate higher-ups and shareholders. Companies are infested with these kinds of people—and they are usually the same people who seem to get the most pleasure out of bashing workers.

"If the problems created by individual managers (or preferably their departments or functions) are telegraphed back to the company via a union newsletter mailed to the houses of all local managers, the results can be quite interesting and often productive."

Leonard cautions, however, to remember that "crummy corporate behavior isn't just the product of 'renegade managers.' It's a product of the system itself. The tactic of isolating 'renegade managers' is a good one, but it's just that—a tactic. You've still got to tailor your strategy to the fact that the set-up of the corporation as a whole makes it inevitable that they will screw workers, screw neighborhoods. That's why you will always be able to find ammunition.

"In all of this, it is important to remember that politics within a company is quite intense—even more so than in unions since there is no attempt at democracy. By blaming local problems on local managers instead of corporate headquarters, you capitalize on rivalries and create the possibility for implicit alliances with managers or groups of managers who have their own career ambitions. Newsletters containing this kind of information set a cadence which will be picked up by workers and used one-on-one with supervisors.

"It's important to understand that good news travels very fast up through the layers of bureaucracy of corporations. Bad news travels very slowly, if at all. Expanding the circulation of the newsletter to corporate higher-ups can also be productive in later stages of a campaign.

"In all such newsletters or other communications—such as articles in local newspapers that you clip and mail—it's important for the union to present itself as commanding the high ground. This means that the company is allowed ownership of the goals of profit and personal ambition, greed, etc., while the union appropriates the goals of quality, customer satisfaction, productivity, fairness, equitable social cost accounting, etc. After all, if the plant goes down, the company, which probably has fifty others, is hardly impacted. If the business locally goes under, it's the workers and the community who take it in the shorts.

"Thus it becomes the workers' mission to 'pull the business through,' in spite of anti-social behavior, personal ambitions, greed and shortsightedness of local managers. Collectively, workers' knowledge on how a business can be improved, and alternatively,

how some managers are screwing it up, is immense. This knowledge, when focused, can help workers command the high ground."

Start Moving Right Away

One of the things Leonard looks for in developing a strategy is something that can give the workers some encouragement right away. "You're in a crisis situation," says Leonard. "The workers have got to engage in things from the get-go that give them some optimism so they can pull themselves together for a longer fight. Which means you can't sit around for six months taking notes and coming up with this grand scheme. You've got to put it into motion immediately. It might be something very small, but something that operates as a signal to management that things are changing."

Leonard gives a recent example. "It's a big chemical company that's owned by a very conservative family, reclusive and very publicity-shy. The company uses the Deming system, which is a version of the Japanese productivity and quality program. They used it to get their plants competing and they were going to give an award to the plant that had the greatest cost savings and productivity increases. Well, this particular plant won.

"Six hundred workers were all given a big ceremony, hot dogs and pop, and the chairman of the board came down and gave them all a 16-ounce brass medallion with a wooden stand, and it's got the founder's face carved in one side, and on the back, it's got the worker's name, 'Thank you for your cooperation, productivity, teamwork.'

"Then they went into negotiations three weeks later and the company ripped them. The contract expired, five months later still no contract, the company's still sticking it to them.

"So we figured, well, we've got to give them something to get behind until we get things in a row, in terms of the bigger picture. So we got some peel-off stickers and we designed this slogan: 'First in Productivity, Last in Appreciation' and the company's name. Everybody showed up wearing them.

"The company went crazy. They said, 'You take them off. This is disruptive. The customers are going to see this. You take them off or you're suspended.' We had 280 people suspended for up to a month.

"In the meantime, we did an aggressive media campaign in the community. People really picked up on that. It's un-American, constitutional rights, freedom of speech. We worked through the media and got a lot of ink supporting the workers, and put a big billboard up in front of the plant, a highway billboard on the Interstate: 'First in Productivity, Last in Appreciation.' We had some gate actions, some singing."

How Far Do You Go?

The question arises: once a local union attacks a company for its policies on civil rights, toxic dumping, or other issues, what obligation does the union have

once the contract is settled? The union raised the issue of the environment when it wanted to get a contract settled. Was this just opportunism? Will the union continue to fight over these issues?

"Sure, there's some opportunism involved," says Leonard. "For one, the fight over contract issues or institutional survival creates an opportunity for workers to get into areas that they might not otherwise be so easily convinced to get into. And I don't think that some of these lessons are necessarily lost after settlement of the original dispute. Time and time again, for example, we've seen workers learn that the threat of environmental job blackmail is just that—a threat.

"We make it clear to the company early on that anything we've started we're going to finish. We're not going to repudiate any stand we've taken on stuff that they've done, and we're not going to drop it.

"There are obligations to the community. If a local is going to remain viable in today's world, it's got to offer something to the community that the company is incapable of or unwilling to offer. You can never repudiate issues that you have raised during the struggle for a contract. Unless you're dealing with a union-led boycott or something like that, you can never promise cessation or retraction for the sake of a contract.

"We've been in these situations before and we've avoided it scrupulously. Because all you need is one case where the union has signed an agreement saying it will not do these things in order to get a settlement. That could get around and it could destroy this union in every other theater that it ever gets involved in. We've been asked by companies to do that, and we've been very emphatic: No, that's outside the boundaries of settlement.

"Then if the company is willing to establish a new basis for the relationship, maybe in the future if we find something wrong with this company's treatment of any class of individuals or the environment, we'll go to the company and ask them to straighten it up before we go out into the streets.

"But we've never encouraged workers to simply fold it up, we've always encouraged them to keep those ties, and to keep the agitation going. Obviously, we don't have the resources to keep the agitation going on the same level. But you've always got to keep agitating and keep reminding the company of the inherent strength of the union in this sphere, and reminding the community that the union is on their side."

The BASF Campaign

One of the most successful corporate campaigns in recent years was conducted by the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers against the German chemical giant BASF. The OCAW strategy was different from both the Stevens and Hormel campaigns in that it did not attempt to pressure BASF's financial backers. Rather, it found a different weak point around which to organize allies—the corporation's environmental

practices.

The OCAW fight against BASF, a \$25 billion-a-year multinational, lasted five-and-a-half years, from June 1984 till December 1989. Beginning in 1985, a corporate campaign became a central part of the conflict.

In 1984 BASF management at the Geismar, Louisiana plant proposed concessions: a wage freeze, pay cuts for maintenance workers, changes in seniority rules that would allow high-seniority workers to be laid off, and cuts in health coverage. The union would not accept the take-aways, and in June 1984 BASF locked the workers out of the plant and hired temporary replacements. A few months later BASF announced it would permanently subcontract 153 of the 370 jobs in the unit.

In 1987 BASF allowed the production workers to come back to work without a contract, and claimed that the lockout had ended. But 110 maintenance workers did not get their jobs back, because their work had been contracted out. The union not only continued but stepped up the campaign.

The corporate campaign began when Richard Leonard interviewed workers from the Geismar plant in the manner described earlier. The union then hired Richard Miller, from the New York-based Labor Institute, to coordinate the campaign. Miller and Leonard designed a campaign based on earlier OCAW experiences at Delta Refining in Tennessee and R.P. Scherer in North Carolina.

The first step was to unite the locked-out workers and build support structures similar to those developed by P-9.

"We had complete solidarity from our membership from the first day out," says Esnard Gremillion, chairman of OCAW Local 4-620. "We also had a great deal of help from our International union which spent about three-and-a-half million dollars down here in lockout benefits for us through that period of time.

"The first thing we did was to form the women's support group, which was spouses of the members that were locked out. We did that to keep those folks informed on a daily basis, so the company couldn't write these letters alleging different things that were happening.

"Being locked out, we were allowed to draw unemployment compensation from the state. But if we picketed the plant, we would not be able to collect unemployment. They consider that a strike. We were allowed to draw about a million-and-a-half dollars of unemployment through that means.

"So, in order to have a picket at the gate, we enlisted the help of the women's support group, who picketed for us. Of course, we liked to stay nearby but in the background to be with the ladies."

The workers also created their own "Adopt a Family" program. "We got the idea from P-9," says Gremillion. "We tried it and, by God, it worked real good for us. Local unions from across the country would send money to our treasury and we would disburse the funds accordingly to different families."

The next step was to contact government offi-



OCAW member Lisa May was one of 18 union and environmental activists arrested for an hour-long "lock-in" of executives at BASF's American headquarters in Parsippany, New Jersey.

cials. "We went to local elected political figures, which wasn't very productive," Gremillion observes. "We only had a couple of them that even tried to help us as far as writing letters and seeing the company officials about ending the thing."

"Then we got involved with church groups, Catholic, Methodist, Baptist churches and went on a letter writing campaign."

Because BASF was a German company, the campaign had an international dimension. "We traveled world-wide. We went to Germany a half a dozen times to the stockholders meeting in Ludwigshafen, to address them about what BASF is doing in this country that they are not allowed to do in Germany," Gremillion explains. "They are not allowed to lock out people in Germany. We formed a solidarity committee in BASF's Ludwigshafen operation."

The leadership of the chemical workers union in Germany, I.G. Chemie, was somewhat reluctant to go out on a limb for the Geismar workers, so Local 4-620 worked with a group of rank and file militants in the Ludwigshafen plant. The union was careful not to criticize the officials or the union but made it clear that the workers would seek help anywhere they could get it.

Zack Nauth summarized some of the international actions in a January 1990 article distributed by the union:

The OCAW forged international alliances during the lockout with BASF workers, citizens groups and politicians in other countries. Delegations from the U.S. and West Germany visited their opposite numbers and staged demonstrations against pollution problems caused by BASF and others in Germany's Rhine River and the U.S. Mississippi River. German Green Party members visited the U.S., as did Indian victims of the Bhopal industrial disaster. The union protested the company's actions at BASF stockholder meetings in Germany, to the International Labor Organization in Geneva, and the European Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The union's disclosure of BASF computer shipments to South Africa led to their curtailment.

Working for the Environment

The most important allies of the union came from the environmental movement. "We formed coalitions with different environmental groups," Gremillion explains. "In fact we helped found the one that's located nearest to BASF in Geismar, the Ascension Parish Residents Against Toxic Pollutants."

The coalition also included community organiza-

tions and faculty and students at the Tulane University Environmental Law Clinic. They went back to the politicians and the Louisiana courts, and testified in Washington, D.C. before the Senate Committee on Environmental Issues about BASF. This coalition effort produced some precedent-setting court decisions and led to a tightening of state laws on toxic dumping.

Nauth describes one of the coalition's victories in Louisiana: "BASF and other chemical companies discovered the terms of the debate had been shifted when the state denied construction permits for a \$50 million facility because of groundwater contamination at the Geismar site. The decision led to a new state policy of prohibiting such construction, which affected half a dozen chemical plants."

Arguing that BASF was using state tax subsidies to pollute, the union also got the state to order the corporation to pay \$225,000 in back taxes on a herbicide plant.

The corporate campaign was beginning to cost BASF money. The OCAW now extended its coalition approach to BASF operations in Indiana and New Jersey. One of the first actions in New Jersey was a June 1987 demonstration at BASF's U.S. headquarters in Parsippany. About 250 people representing Greenpeace, the National Campaign Against Toxics, the N.J. Industrial Union Council, and the OCAW formed a human chain to block entrance to the headquarters and draw national attention to the Geismar plant's record of pollution. Eighteen protesters were arrested.

In 1988 the OCAW carried its campaign to Indiana, where it organized against a proposed \$750 million project that would include a hazardous waste processing facility—a landfill and incinerator. The union worked with Citizens for a Clean County and Mothers Against Toxic Chemical Hazards and hired an environmentalist to coordinate the campaign.

Citizens for a Clean County filed suit against the project and in June a judge invalidated the sale of county lands to BASF. BASF's plans to relocate the project in Haverville, Ohio and Terre Haute, Indiana ran into similar opposition, supported by the OCAW. BASF was eventually forced to scale down its project to a \$100 million dollar plant.

In 1989 the campaign was again carried to New Jersey, this time to stop BASF's attempt to use state lands as a site for a new corporate headquarters. The union enlisted the aid of the Association of North Jersey Conservators to halt a land swap between the state and the Rockefeller-owned International Trade Center (ITC). BASF was to lease land from ITC. But the Conservators argued that ITC was receiving valuable state parkland in return for land of less value. The swap was stopped.

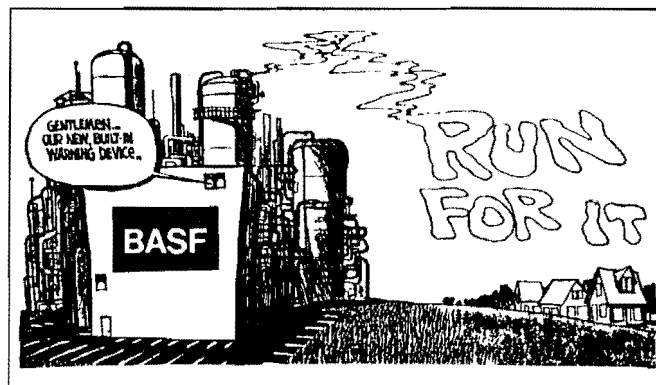
It was these cost-inflicting acts that brought BASF back to the bargaining table. Nauth wrote: "The three final acts that union officials believe broke BASF's will were the blocking of a massive hazardous waste incinerator-chemical dump project in Indiana, the halting of a \$50 million expansion in Geismar, and efforts to stop the company from cutting state forest land in New Jersey for a new corporate headquarters."

Finally, on December 18, 1989, the Local 4-620 workers ratified an agreement to return to work. The 110 maintenance workers went back to their jobs.

Esnard Gremillion calls the settlement "a partial victory of sorts. I don't think we got what we deserved nor needed. We went back to work for a dollar an hour less than when we were locked out in 1984. But still it was better than what most people were working for at the time. We did get some new language on contract employees; that helped us.

"The thing that upsets me the most is we did not get credit for the five-and-a-half years of the lockout as far as retirement benefits go. So that's going to be high on the agenda next time we get into negotiations."

Through the corporate campaign against BASF the union made an important contribution to the en-



vironmental movement. William Fotenot, environmental specialist in the Louisiana Attorney General's office, said that the union "has raised the level of consciousness about the environment in Louisiana."⁴ As a result the state is now more closely regulating the petrochemical industry.

Gremillion says the local will continue to work on ecological issues: "We're going to keep on with the environmental program as far as showing some leadership. We're going to continue to explain to people locally why it's necessary to not only have good, clean, safe jobs, but to clean up the environment as well. It's all in our best interest, and we don't have the right to pollute the environment and turn it over to our grandchildren.

"We got calls from all over the country and the world from people who wanted to know what held us together," says Gremillion. "When you really look at it, they were after the whole union. They were after your livelihood, your dignity, and everything that goes along with it. So you've got to stand for something. Like the old saying, 'If you ain't got nothin', you ain't got nothin' to lose.' So there you are."

Conclusions

The corporate campaigns discussed here dealt with very different sorts of problems. The J.P. Stevens campaign was a drive for union recognition and con-

tracts. Hormel was a strike against concessions. BASF was a fight against a lockout. Each of the campaigns was also incredibly complex: Stevens involved maneuvering banks and insurance companies. Hormel required tremendous logistics to support 1,500 families and mobilize those families in a solidarity campaign. BASF was a world-wide campaign against a German company largely fought over environmental issues. Given the diverse nature of these campaigns, one hesitates to draw generalizations. But we will.

First, a full-blown corporate campaign needs the support or at least the consent of the International union. ACTWU's support for the Stevens campaign and the OCAW's support for the BASF campaign made those victories possible. Where an International union sets out to destroy a campaign, as happened when the UFCW turned against Local P-9, a corporate campaign has little chance of success. At the same time, small unions like the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, which took on and beat Campbell, or local unions like Teamster Local 912 at Watsonville, have used aspects of the corporate campaign to win important victories.

Second, a big campaign requires tremendous cohesion at the level of the local union. The Hormel and BASF workers spent months or years in constant meetings, demonstrations, fundraising, and public relations. The United Support Group in Austin held meetings seven nights a week. It requires tremendous unity to launch such a campaign, though once begun the campaign itself will tend to generate many activities which build cohesion.

Third, as Rogers and Leonard have emphasized in their different ways, such a campaign requires the most serious analysis of the enemy, using both the workers' knowledge and sophisticated research techniques. There must be as comprehensive a plan as time and resources allow, and at the same time, the union must seize on opportunities that present themselves.

Fourth, a corporate campaign should be begun well before workers are forced out on strike or locked out, with the goal of making a strike unnecessary.

Fifth, as Jane Slaughter wrote in *Building Bridges: The Emerging Grassroots Coalition of Labor and Community*, "A corporate campaign that targets power structures is a valuable tactic, but it must be combined with hurting the company's pocketbook directly....

"A corporate campaign allows the union to

garner large amounts of publicity and to be seen by the community as the side taking the moral high ground, two components of victory which are often lacking in traditional labor struggles. But the muscle of economic pressure—whether it comes from the company's erstwhile allies or from lost production—must come into play, and quickly enough to make the difference."

Corporate campaigns hold challenges beyond the tremendous human and financial resources they require and the logistical complexities they involve. They may involve unfamiliar allies and movements with very different political histories and—at least on the surface—with different outlooks than that of the labor movement. They take place partly on a terrain the union is not familiar with, outside the confines of the plant and the local community. They take place on Wall Street or in Washington, perhaps even in Bonn or Johannesburg.

But as Dick Leonard says, "What else are you going to do if you're not engaged in corporate campaign activities? Are you just going to get down on both knees instead of one knee to beg from the boss? What's the alternative? There's really no alternative outside of effective political action, which is, I think, a long way down the road."

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Instead of Action Questions for this chapter, see the corporate campaign questionnaire in Appendix A.

Notes

1. In addition to an interview with Rogers, sources are: Jane Slaughter, "Ray Rogers: 'Workers don't have to keep losing,'" *The Progressive*, June 1988; "Ray Rogers' Strategy for Labor: Learning from the Hormel Strike," *Dollars & Sense*, January-February 1987; Ray Rogers, "How Labor Can Fight Back," *USA Today*, July 1984; Dedra Hauser and Robert Howard, "An Interview with Ray Rogers," *Working Papers*, January-February 1982; Ray Rogers, "Challenging Conglomerates," *The Unionist*, December 21, 1984. The *Working Papers* interview contains a detailed account of the J.P. Stevens campaign.
2. The complex and controversial story of this unique struggle is best told in Hardy Green's *On Strike At Hormel: The Struggle for a Democratic Labor Movement* (Temple University Press, 1990).
3. Zack Nauth, *In These Times*, January 24-30, 1990.
4. Frances Frank Marcus, "Labor Dispute in Louisiana Ends with Ecological Gain," *The New York Times*, January 3, 1990.

14. Organizing Among Immigrant Workers

Immigrant workers are among the most exploited in our society. Employers take advantage of the immigrants' ignorance of language, law or custom in every conceivable way. At the same time governments write immigration laws to promote business interests rather than human rights.

Immigrant workers come from all over the world with a wide variety of backgrounds, and their legal status in this country is also diverse. Some, from field workers to nurses, have been brought into the country by labor contractors and virtually sold into slavery. They will be delivered by a contractor to an employer, reside for a specified time in the country, and then be returned at the end of their term to Mexico or the Philippines. Some "illegal aliens," better described as undocumented workers, survive in the underground economy where employers do not pay the minimum wage, do not have worker's compensation, and do not deduct Social Security. Even legal immigrants, if they are from Asia, Africa, or Latin America, face racial discrimination.

There are more stories about organizing immigrant workers in Chapters 16, 17, 18 and 20.

In cities such as Boston, Toronto, New York, Chicago, Miami, San Francisco and Los Angeles, immigrants are the bulk of the workforce in such industries as garment sweatshops, restaurants, domestic help, or light manufacture. Organizing these workers is essential for the labor movement because they make up such a fast-growing proportion of the workforce. The obstacles are many: the intransigence of the employers, the unfairness of the immigration laws, and unions' failure to reach out to immigrants (in the worst cases the racism of the unions). Nevertheless, in several areas unions and other organizations are developing techniques to help organize immigrant workers, or, where they are organized, to help promote them to full participation in the life of the

union.

One common theme that arises from the experiences of unions who are working with immigrants is the need to be involved not only on the job but in the immigrant communities. These communities are often tight-knit, as a defense against the isolation and discrimination felt by strangers in a strange land. Immigrant workers must often be organized through their own ethnic or community structures and in their own languages by those who understand their customs. While the ultimate goal may be to bring workers into a union, it is often necessary to create other sorts of structures which make it possible for the immigrant worker to find his or her way into the union.

Defending Immigrant Workers With and Without Documents

West Coast District 10 of the United Electrical Workers (UE) has made the defense of immigrant workers in union and non-union shops an integral part of its work. "We don't make a distinction between immigrant workers with legal documentation and without," explains UE International Representative David Johnson. "Our position is that all workers in this country ought to be organized, and particularly immigrant workers who are the most exploited have got to be organized, if we're going to maintain the wage and benefit levels of the rest of working people in this country.

"The founders of our union in the 1930s were almost all immigrant workers. Jim Matles, who was our first director of organization, was an Eastern European immigrant who couldn't speak much English."

District 10's 4,000 members include large numbers from Mexico, El Salvador and Guatemala, and some from Honduras, Nicaragua and South America.



Philip Decker/Impact Visuals

Undocumented workers harvest grapefruit near Phoenix, Arizona.

There are also smaller numbers from the Philippines, Korea, Vietnam and Cambodia.

In the mid-1980s debate began over a new immigration law (first the Simpson-Mazzoli and later the Simpson-Rodino bill). The bill included a very limited amnesty program, for illegal immigrants who had been in the U.S. since January 1, 1982 and who could pass a series of other tests. It also provided sanctions against employers who hired illegal immigrants.

"Most people in the labor movement took the position of supporting the employer sanctions," says Johnson, but the UE opposed them. He explains:

"First of all, they're unworkable.

"Second of all, they don't actually provide sanctions on the employer, they sanction the employee. What they do is divide workers into a group of people who are legally authorized to work and those who aren't. There's already enough divisions among working people in this country, we don't need another one based on that.

"It also makes the exploitation of those employees who are not legally authorized to work that much more likely and a higher level of exploitation drags down wages and benefits for all workers.

"Furthermore, it enflames a kind of racist nationalism which again stands as an obstacle to people working together for justice."

So rather than joining with the rest of the labor movement in supporting the proposed sanctions, says Johnson, "We joined with community organizations, Mexican and Central American human rights groups and political organizations to try and stop that law from being passed. We participated in marches and protests and a whole series of activities. The bulk of the labor movement, because of their support for employer sanctions, were cut off from the movements."

In the late 1980s the UE joined with the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) and with community organizations to form the Coalition for Humane Immigration Reform of Los Angeles (CHIRLA). CHIRLA fought for a broader, more inclusive immigration law, and once the Simpson-Rodino bill (the Immigration Reform and Control Act) was passed, it educated workers about the rights they did have under the law.

Fighting La Migra

At this same time the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), known in the Latino community as "La Migra," stepped up its raids on workplaces to round up undocumented workers and deport them to their countries of origin. The UE took

the position that it would try to defend these workers.

"We carried out educational programs both in the shops where we represented workers," says Johnson, "and in the shops that we were attempting to organize, to inform people about what their rights were in case the INS did come. We did role-playing to train them on how to respond if the INS were to raid. We did that through the steward system in the existing shops and through our organizing committees in the organizing shops.

"About the time the law passed we set up an organization called El Comité de Defensa del Trabajador Inmigrante [Committee for the Defense of the Immigrant Worker]. In the organized shops we would work through the steward system to recruit activists to the committee.

"Partly it was a tool to encourage membership activity in the union. For some people who joined the Committee it was the first time they had become involved in the union. Some of those people went on to become good shop stewards or local leaders. And partly it was a mechanism to train a broader group of our members about what the law really said, because there was a lot of confusion about the rights of workers who didn't qualify for the so-called amnesty.

"We also did a pretty broad campaign in unorganized shops in our industry. We did a lot of leafletting, we did some plant gate meetings asking people to join the Committee. We passed out educational materials such as little 'know your rights' cards. We held workshops in community centers where Mexican and Central American workers live with the theme of 'Know your rights as a worker in this country.' And we also made an organizational pitch, that until they're members of the union, until they have a contract to protect them, then they are fair game for a boss to exploit them.

"The idea was not to get ourselves involved in long legal proceedings, but to have the shop floor mobilization so we could protect our members." When INS agents raided UE shops, or shops the UE was organizing, instead of frightened, terrorized workers, it found workers who knew their rights and were not easily intimidated.

This approach enhanced the UE's reputation in the immigrant communities. "It didn't lead to massive numbers of workers joining the union per se," says Johnson, "but it did get our name out among immigrant workers. It led to contacts that in turn led to a number of organizing campaigns. It also increased our ties with community groups."

The UE found its predictions about the new immigration law to be correct: the immigrant workforce has been divided into documented and undocumented workers. In particular most of the estimated 400,000 Salvadorans in southern California, and many other Central Americans, had not been in the United States long enough to benefit from the amnesty provisions of the law. Undocumented immigrant workers are paid \$5 an hour as experienced machine operators, when other workers doing the same job are making \$10 an hour. The effect is to drag down wages for legal im-

migrants and for U.S. citizens.

The INS enforces the new immigration law in a way that frequently denies workers their due process. The INS reviews the employer's "I-9" employee documentation forms, and then sends a list of workers who must be fired if the employer wants to avoid a fine. Johnson recounts one case where the INS told an employer to fire 50 undocumented workers. The UE got legal assistance and found that 25 of them either were legal immigrants or might make appeals for political asylum which would allow them to keep working legally until their appeals were denied. "So the punchline for us," says Johnson, "is that this fine has nothing to do with sanctioning the boss, it has to do with sanctioning the workers for working. Because in the cases we've run across, we haven't seen any fines of any companies."

With the current law and the current political climate, most of the undocumented workers are going to remain undocumented for the time being, says Johnson. "So the biggest thing that we're doing with undocumented workers is trying to build union organization. There's not a whole lot we can do about their legal situation. But we can do something about their wages and conditions."

Despite the difficulties Johnson is pretty optimistic about continued organizing. "There is just a tremendous pool of pro-union sentiment among Latin American immigrants," he points out. "The level of union consciousness, both among Mexican and Central American workers, is much, much higher than among the average worker. And particularly in the case of Salvadorans and Guatemalans, many people come here with the experience to immediately become a leader in the struggle. So to our way of thinking, this is a real opportunity to enrich the labor movement as a whole with people with some pretty impressive histories of struggle."

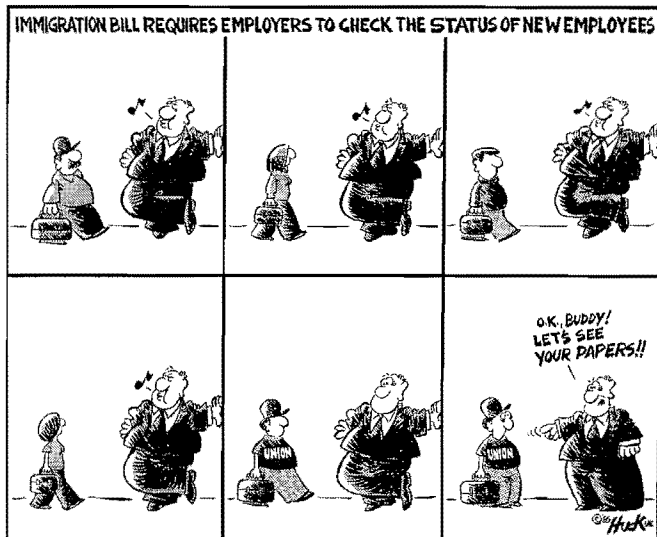
Organizers Must Know Basic Rights

Edgar deJesús, Manager of ACTWU Local 2-H in New York City, believes that organizing has become more difficult since passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). "It's had the impact of being an anti-union bill," says deJesús.

There are now large numbers of Latino workers (and many other immigrant workers) who have been driven into the underground economy, where, because they work illegally, they are afraid of victimization if they become involved in union drives. Puerto Rican workers, who are U.S. citizens, have not suffered the same difficulties as undocumented immigrants, but as a result of IRCA many employers now discriminate against them in hiring, fearing to hire workers who are "foreign looking."

Yet these workers can be organized, says deJesús, if organizers are attentive to some of the basic issues confronting Latino workers. "People have to fight with their unions for bilingual literature, bilingual contracts, organizers need to know as much as possible

about things like the EEOC [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission] and the Fair Labor Standards Act. You will find that where Latin workers are employed there exists massive abuse of federal labor legislation. So many times I've seen workers not knowing that they are supposed to get overtime for working on Sundays after a 40 hour week. Even workers



being armed with some of this basic information will lead to success as they start to organize."

DeJesús believes that if unions are to succeed in organizing Latinos they will have to combine the fight for unions with the fight for political power. He gives an example of an area where he believes this strategy would be essential. "I was in Lawrence, Massachusetts for several months. Over 50 percent of the population is Puerto Rican and Dominican, but I would say that under 10 percent of the workforce is unionized. Here's a city that in terms of the political power establishment is all Anglo. So if you were a union considering going to that city and organizing it, the task of organizing the union would have to occur simultaneously with the task of empowering the Latin communities.

"And Lawrence is not by itself. You'll find a lot of these small industrial towns that have large minority populations. They are waiting to be organized, but the unions need to put more resources in that direction."

Organizing Asian Immigrant Workers

When organizing among Asian workers, it is important to remember that they may have had previous contact with unions in their own countries, says Mark Masaoka. Masaoka is a member of the executive board of United Auto Workers Local 645 in Van Nuys, California and of the Alliance of Asian-Pacific American Labor.

"First, find out what their perceptions of unions are," says Masaoka. "Some countries, for example Japan, have strong, establishment unions, whereas in Thailand virtually all the unions are underground. In

countries like Korea and the Philippines you have a sector of left unions and a sector of clearly company unions. There have been quite a few murders of Filipino union leaders. In Korea the increasing industrialization has led to a movement for union democracy which has displaced some of the previous union structures.

"Many workers will already have fairly developed views about unions on their own, and it's important to explain the kind of union they're being asked to work with."

Many of the workers coming to the United States from countries like Korea and the Philippines believe in democratic and militant labor unions, says Masaoka, and they can make a real contribution to the U.S. labor movement. In some cases, however, rather than being welcomed as allies these workers have instead confronted racism.

Masaoka recommends that organizers begin by looking at the resources in the Asian community in question. "I would talk to the people in progressive community organizations or institutions that provide services to those communities. Find out what kind of ethnic media exists. In the larger cities you may have progressive movements such as the Alliance of Asian-Pacific American Labor."

CATA Organizes Migrant Farm Workers in U.S. and Puerto Rico

CATA, the Comité de Apoyo a los Trabajadores Agrícolas (or the Farm Workers Support Committee), organizes migrant farm workers in the Northeast. It has helped found a union called COTA, Comité Organizador de Trabajadores Agrícolas, or Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee. The key strategic idea for CATA and COTA is that migrant farm workers must be organized in their home communities as well as in the communities where they work.

Angel Dominguez has been the main architect of CATA's strategy. During the 1970s he worked for the Agricultural Workers Migrant Ministry, an ecumenical organization inspired by liberation theology. "They believed that you provide Bible study classes," says Dominguez, "but at the same time you provide social services and direct organizing."

One of the struggles which led to CATA's founding came about because the Farm Bureau of New Jersey was trying to stop farm workers from receiving a higher minimum wage. Dominguez helped organize protests and lobbying in the state capital. "We won, and that was a big victory for the farm workers," says Dominguez.

To organize CATA Dominguez traveled to Puerto Rico and spent three months visiting the towns and barrios where the farm workers lived when they were not working in the fields in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New York state. At a congress held in 1979, CATA was founded.

CATA has about 3,000 members, ninety percent of them farm workers and the rest supporters. It has offices in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Puerto Rico. This allows the organization to have contact with its members and potential members year round. CATA holds an annual assembly in New Jersey where 10 members are elected to the board of directors. *Con-siglios* or councils held in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Puerto Rico each elect another two members to the board.

CATA's organizing strategy includes services but also emphasizes education. At the center of its work are the *charlas*, from the Spanish word *charlar*, to chat. These are workshops where workers discuss their problems and how to overcome them. "Through those workshops we get the answer from the workers themselves," says Dominguez. "How do you deal with this issue in your labor camp? How do you deal with this issue in your community? When people provide the answers, then they're willing to commit themselves. You don't push it down their throat. Because not everybody is ready to do organizing at the same time at the same level."

In 1986 CATA helped to organize a union for farm workers, COTA. "Since then COTA has been involved in six elections," says Dominguez, "and has won three and lost three. The three we lost were by very small margins. Out of three elections we have one contract and we're still negotiating two. It's difficult because there's no law to protect union organizing for farm workers in New Jersey. What we have won is the right to have a union election."

Laundry Workers Empower Immigrant Members

Some immigrants have found jobs in shops that are already unionized. Our next two examples deal with how existing unions can integrate and serve their immigrant members.

AFL-CIO Laundry and Dry Cleaning Local 66, headquartered in Boston, recognized that with growing numbers of immigrant workers in the laundry industry, it had to create new attitudes and new structures. The local has 500 members in the Boston area and another 400 scattered through Massachusetts, Connecticut and New York state. Most of its members work in commercial laundries, eighty percent are women, and a majority are immigrants or members of racial minorities. In Boston the membership is largely Haitian, other Caribbean, Central American, and Cape Verdean. In Springfield, Massachusetts the immigrants are from Portugal or the Azores. In some of the smaller cities, the workers are Black and white Americans.

Respecting Language and Culture

"The first thing is just learning about their language and culture," says David Brenner, president and

business agent of Local 66, "and that means spending time with people, having people explain what their home country is like. We learn about their history, their festivals, their celebrations, and then publicly show appreciation for that in our union meetings.

"When we were doing the organizing drive at Hospital Laundries, the meetings were all translated.



Laundry workers celebrate victory.

For example, if I spoke in English, then on one side of me was a Latino worker who would translate into Spanish, and on the other side was a Cape Verdean worker who would translate into Portuguese Creole."

Brenner says it is important to learn members' past experience with unions and their expectations. "There are three problems as I see it. One is where there is no trade union history, so there is the problem of explaining what the trade union movement is. The second is where there is a much more militant trade union movement, such as we see in many of the Central American countries. The third is where their labor movement experience has been a negative one—more often than not in the U.S. they have been ignored or shunted aside, or just plain taken advantage of."

The Union Democracy Project

Local 66 organized the Union Democracy Project as a training program for members, says its director, Solangel Rodriguez. "We have set up shop committees in each laundry," she explains. "We've identified a core group of about five people in each shop. Those committees meet regularly around issues that are current in the shop. But they also strategize about contacts for new organizing, negotiations, and contract campaigns."

The union is training shop committee members as stewards and on health and safety and benefits. There are monthly meetings of the "specialists" on these different topics to which the rank and file are also invited.

A meeting of the benefits specialists will deal not only with the union's benefits, such as the legal services plan, but also with services available through so-

cial service groups or the city, such as programs on substance abuse or tenants' rights.

In dealing with some issues, the shop committees have organized larger meetings in the lunchrooms involving all of the employees. Some shop committees have met with management to discuss the members' concerns.

"What we're trying to do is make people feel like they are the union," says Rodriguez, "and also bridge the gap between the union and the workers.

"One of the biggest issues is that people don't feel entitled to better treatment. As women they're still very oppressed; as workers they're oppressed; and as people who don't speak the language they're oppressed. So we are trying to overcome those barriers.

"For example, we've had to deal with how people see sexual harassment, coming from different cultures. We had one woman who was being harassed by a supervisor who had a history of sexually harassing all the women, dating many of the women that worked in the shop and threatening them with the loss of their jobs if they didn't cooperate with him. This particular woman came forward."

The union supported her and began to work on her grievance.

But, says Rodriguez, "When we went out and tried to solicit support from the other workers and the other women who had actually witnessed a lot of this, or had been victims of it, it was very difficult to get people to come forward. A lot of the women felt that if a woman gave in to the supervisor, then she was just as much to blame. A lot of the men didn't want to deal with the issue at all.

"We tried to educate people in the process of building this case. So there was a lot of dialogue.

"What the Union Democracy Project works on constantly is people's self-esteem, making sure that we recognize every time someone is doing something good and has been successful in their lives, whether it be as a mother or as a worker. We constantly mention all of these successes. We're trying to empower people."

The shop committee members from all of the union's shops will be brought together four times a year in the Shop Committee Council. "The idea," says Rodriguez, "is that someday that council will become the policy-making body of the union."

The other purpose of the shop committees is to train organizers. "Before a worker can go out and talk about the union to another worker," says Brenner, "the worker has got to be able to understand what the union's doing in his own workplace. They've got to passionately and with great understanding and willingness go out and talk about what is the union. So every member should be an organizer."

"We also have an English as a Second Language class," says Rodriguez, "We've now got three volunteer English teachers. One program in the shops is funded half by the union and half by the employer. The people come in at six o'clock in the morning to take their English class in the cafeteria."

Dealing with the Legal Issue

Local 66's union contract provides for a legal services program which can deal with immigration issues. The union sometimes educates employers who may not know their legal responsibilities under the immigration law, since some employers are overzealous in demanding documentation.

Some of Local 66's members do not have legal status to work in this country. "Basically we ignore that," says David Brenner. "We forge ahead, encouraging people to take the stands that they know they need to take. We try and build a framework so that they feel comfortable taking those steps. In other words, we try and assure them through deeds and actions that there is legal representation to assist them, that the strength of the union is so strong and the wrath of the organized workers would be so great that an employer would be insane to take on our members on that issue.

"The union takes a very clear position. When the employer says, 'Well, you know, a lot of these people don't have their papers,' the union rep says, 'Yeah, so what?' Then if the employer tries to pull something, not just the union has to respond quickly as an institution, but the key is that the members are willing to respond quickly and let it be known that they're not going to tolerate someone being singled out because of their legal status."

Where Immigrants Are a Minority In the Union

The McDonnell Douglas aircraft plant near Toronto employs 3,500 workers, and about 10 percent of them are minorities: West Indians, Africans, Latin Americans, South Asians and immigrants from the Philippines, Korea and Hong Kong. Another minority is the 200 to 300 women.

When many people of color immigrated into Canada during the 1960s and 1970s, the country experienced a white backlash and some racist incidents. In response to this growing racial tension, in 1983 the Canadian Labour Congress, the largest labor central in Canada, launched an educational campaign. The auto workers union (then part of the UAW) decided to implement the campaign by creating local union human rights committees. There was already a Fair Practices Committee in Local 1967 at McDonnell Douglas, and this committee took on that work.

To familiarize the native-born Canadians with the problems of the immigrants, the committee conducted interviews and published them in the union newspaper, disguising the identity of the immigrant workers. As one of the immigrants said, "We suffer in silence." The interviews were meant to end that silence.

Nick De Carlo, now president of Canadian Auto Workers Local 1967, says that the union attempted to show the similar problems facing all members, native-born and immigrant. For example, says De Carlo, "Transfer rights in the plant were very arbitrary. They

transferred anybody anywhere. They would transfer a union activist right before an election. We related this to immigrant workers who were also having problems with arbitrary transfers. The idea was to show that everyone had the same problems."

This also tended to make the immigrant workers more comfortable with the union, and to show them that the union took their issues seriously.

The union had other channels for dealing with the problems of immigrants. In the 1960s the government had passed a Human Rights Code and established a Human Rights Commission which had the power to prosecute offenders. Under the law the company was required to maintain a workplace free of racism, and was held responsible for any racist incident. However, prosecution through the HRC took a long time.

Moreover, many of the incidents were between workers, and the union did not want to call upon the company to discipline workers. So the union developed a different policy. In most cases the incidents involved a white worker bothering a worker of color. "The union would go to the white worker," says De Carlo, "and explain what was wrong with their behavior, and the possible legal action that could result."

In one case a white worker had ridiculed a Black worker with whom he worked by singing parodies of Black music. The Black worker complained to the union that the needling was getting on his nerves. The union responded first by talking to the white worker, but he could not be persuaded to change. Then a meeting was held between the two workers, but the white worker remained resistant.

Finally the union representative explained to the white worker that if the incident were reported to the company, he could be disciplined. The white worker laid off and things cooled off. At no time did the union report the incident to the company or the government. "We try to deal with it among the workers," says De Carlo. "The real solution is shop floor organization and an identity of the workers with each other."

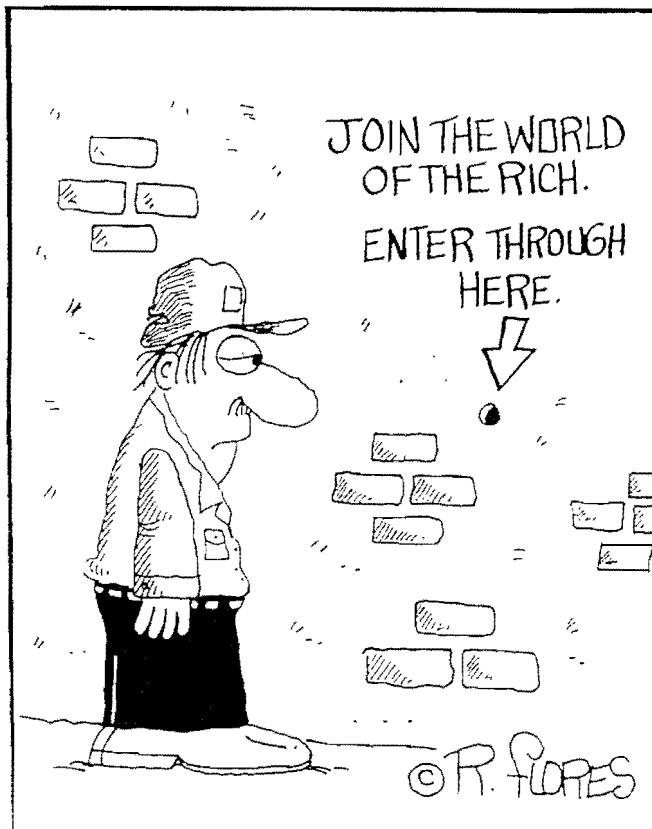
Special Grievance Policy

The union also developed a special policy for grievances on racial or sexual harassment. A worker could take a grievance about such harassment to the regular steward or committeeperson—or she or he could take it directly to the president or shop chair, by-passing any middle level resistance that might exist.

That policy had arisen out of an incident where a committeeman was sexually harassing a woman worker. Her complaint had been suppressed. The national union had then removed the committeeman, but in what was perhaps a show of sexist solidarity, the committeeman was re-elected. In such cases, obviously the grieving worker could not count on the usual grievance steps to be properly observed. At the same time the union adopted a policy that the locals must bring all complaints of racial or sexual harassment to the attention of the national union within 10 days. This allowed the union to closely monitor these inci-

dents and was a clear indication that it took them seriously.

On the political front, the Auto Workers opposed a racist immigration policy and called for fairness in the granting of political asylum. When the Canadian Labour Congress came out opposing immigration during periods of economic crisis, the Auto Workers



disagreed, calling for a more open immigration policy.

Says De Carlo: "The issue in unions is: How can people be united if one person is suffering and nothing is done about it? It's one for all and all for one. If that principle isn't applied, you can't fight against concessions and team concept. You have to involve immigrant workers in the union's struggle, so workers have the experience of working together."

De Carlo's local encourages immigrant workers to become involved in the local's standing committees and other activities. That practice, he says, has worked. In 1987 the union held a refusal to work because of health and safety problems. Out of the plant's 3,500 workers, some 2,500 refused to work. "All nationalities united," says De Carlo, "and that helped to break down barriers."

IRATE—Advocates for Immigrants

IRATE, the Immigration Rights Advocacy, Training and Education Project of Boston, is a coalition of 10 unions which is working to help immigrant workers and promote union organization among them. IRATE's strategy is to promote workers' centers in immigrant communities as a bridge to future union

organization.

The IRATE coalition was formed in response to the passage of the IRCA in October 1986, to help immigrant workers deal with the new law. During its first year the group received state funding to get information to unions about how the new immigration law would affect members. IRATE also joined with other groups to fight to expand the amnesty provisions of the law to include more immigrants.

IRATE's main goal now is to bring together unions and immigrant workers, providing direct services, education and organizing. IRATE has dealt largely with Irish, Haitian and Latino workers.

In the area of direct service, says Director Ann Philbin, "We provide information, referral and direct involvement with people filing claims related to workplace abuse problems. We help file claims with workers compensation or the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination. We help people who are being discriminated against because they look or sound foreign, and employers who are confused about what the documentation requirements are. We also help unions which are trying to understand what their responsibilities are around documentation, and how they can best work with workers who don't have documents."

Some workers are referred through community organizations or unions or friends, or sometimes workers approach Philbin when she is giving a talk on workers' rights at an English class or a community meeting.

A typical problem, says Philbin, is employers who do not pay immigrant workers their full wages. "For example, I worked with a group of 10 workers from Colombia, El Salvador and Guatemala who were owed upwards of \$1,500 from an employer that did assembly of computer chips." The employer had closed the plant and moved to another location. Philbin helped the workers file a claim with the Department of Labor and went to court with them to translate.

On one occasion the League of Haitian Families brought a problem to the attention of IRATE. "There were three Haitian men who were working in a restaurant," says Philbin, "and the employer was systematically firing Black people and replacing them with white people. So we put the three Haitian workers in touch with the lawyers so they could take legal action."

In this way IRATE is able to create good will toward the labor movement.

Helping Organizing Drives

IRATE provides translation and information for unions involved in organizing drives. "For example," says Philbin, "when the Laundry Workers were trying to organize a couple of laundries in Lowell and Lawrence, I went out with the union organizers and helped to translate when they made house visits. And in another instance where one of the key workers in the organizing campaign was being intimidated because of her legal status, I talked with her, basically to

reinforce that the union was trying to support her.

"And recently a union that was trying to organize a fish packing plant called us. They had a problem where the boss was threatening to call Immigration, and there were a number of people inside who didn't have documents. They wanted to know what people's right were and they needed materials in Portuguese and Spanish explaining those rights."

IRATE has also acted as a go-between for workers having difficulty with their unions. Philbin received a call from two Salvadoran building cleaners. "We set up a meeting for them to go in to the union office and meet with someone about wages and vacation pay they were being denied. One of the women was not being paid union scale, did not even know what it meant to be a member of the union because she had never had any contact with the union before. She only speaks Spanish, and when she called she couldn't seem to find the right person. So it was simply going in with those two workers and introducing them to union staff. Now they actually have a name of somebody in the union who speaks Spanish and can work with them. And they'll spread the word to other workers who are experiencing similar problems."

In addition to its own work, IRATE also shares offices and works closely with another organization which offers support to immigrant workers, the Newcomers Job Bank.

"We're a coalition of eight community organizations that are helping to help find jobs for recent arrivals," explains Diane Lopez, coordinator of the Job Bank. "We do workplace rights education and monitor workplace abuses. And we also do employer education about filling out the I-9 form, the form the federal government requires for documentation purposes."

Lopez, who speaks Spanish and Portuguese, explains that the Newcomers Job Bank works mostly with the Central American, Haitian, Brazilian, Southeast Asian and Irish communities. "We comb the pages of the newspapers, we are on mailing lists for hospitals and hotels." The Job Bank is also working with community organizations to form some workers' cooperatives as a way of creating jobs.

Know Your Rights

IRATE's second area of activity is education. "One of the reasons that workers are being exploited is that they don't know that they have any rights on their job," explains Philbin. "The fact is that even though it's illegal to hire someone without documents, once they are hired they have the same workplace rights that other workers have." IRATE has produced a booklet, *Workplace Rights for Immigrant Workers*, which is translated into Haitian Creole and Spanish.

In 1989 IRATE gave 45 talks on immigrant workers' rights to English as a Second Language classes and community meetings. They have produced a video called "You and Your Rights on the Job" to show to such groups. On several occasions, IRATE followed up the talk by bringing in union organizers to talk to the classes.

"Organizing into unions is what we see as the long-term goal, but now we are in a pre-organizing state," says Philbin. "We are planning to build workers' committees in immigrant-refugee organizations. There is already a Chinese Workers' Center in the Chinese community, formed out of the closing of a garment shop. Most of the workers were women. They were pushing for retraining, and out of that has grown an organization that does a tremendous amount of work on workplace issues." For example, the Center demanded translators at the Department of Employment and Training. The Chinese Workers Center has become IRATE's model for organizing other immigrant workers.

IRATE is developing close ties with the Central American community organizations and with the League of Haitian Families. "We plan," says Philbin, "to help organize other such workers' centers in the other immigrant communities—Salvadoran, Haitian, Irish, Brazilian. The idea is that unions would participate in training workplace advocates in each of these communities, which means that those workers will be leaders in their workplaces and potential contacts for union organizing. But they will also become a resource to their own community, and workers will start to come to that committee for assistance with workplace issues."

"The unions that came together to form IRATE see that right now the answers aren't all there for organized labor about how to work with immigrant-refugee workers. They understand the need to bridge the gap that has kept the unions and the immigrant workers apart. So I see it as a bold initiative on the part of those unions, to say, We're going to hear from immigrants and refugees themselves about what their workplace issues are."

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The utmost respect for immigrant workers' languages, backgrounds and ability to organize themselves is necessary if unions are to reach this growing proportion of the unorganized. It is necessary to deal not only with the worker on the job but with existing community organizations.

In addition, organizing immigrant workers requires a truly international outlook. The strategy of trying to protect the workers from "our country" is doomed to failure. We can only protect the workers on our side of the border if we also help to organize and raise the standard of living of workers on the other side of the border.

Business recognizes no borders, and moves freely from the United States to Canada to Mexico to Asia as it pleases. Increasingly, we live in a world without borders. The question of legal documentation is a problem created by governments to be taken advantage of by business, and works to divide workers into two groups so that business can pit them one against the other. The words "sister" and "brother" do not depend upon visas or green cards; they depend only upon the power of unions to make them real.

Action Questions

The following questions should help local union leaders get a handle on the concerns of their immigrant members. Since immigrant workers may be from more than one country, the following questions would have to be asked regarding each country, perhaps in several sessions. These questions would also be helpful in writing articles or interviewing immigrant workers for your union paper.

1. What is the composition of your workplace or local by race, sex, national origin, language? If you don't now have this information, how could you get it?

2. What countries do the immigrants in your local come from? Are there particular ethnic groups within that country? What languages do they speak? Are there important dialect differences in the language? How fluent are most of the immigrants in English? Can they read and write their own language(s)? Are union documents (constitution, by-laws, contracts, newspapers, leaflets) available in translation?

3. What religion do the immigrants practice? What are their most important religious or other holidays? What allowances for their holidays have been made in your contract and in the planning of union meetings and other activities?

4. What is the homeland of your immigrant members like politically and economically? Is there high unemployment? Low wages? Do political freedoms exist? Can unions operate freely? What were your members' reasons for leaving?

5. What is the status of women in the homeland? Do they have full political rights? Do women work outside the home? Do women have the right to divorce and birth control? Do women play a role in politics, in unions?

6. What is the trade union history of that country? Are the unions "official" state-controlled unions? "Company unions" dominated by the employers? Or are they independent? Are the unions affiliated with various political parties or religious groups? Are the unions quiet or are they active and militant? Do unionists suffer repression by the government or employers? Is being a union member dangerous in the home country? Did your members belong to unions back home?

7. What is the attitude of people in that country toward the United States (or Canada)? What has been their experience with the United States (or Canada)?

8. Are the immigrant members working in this country legally? If not, what problems has this presented for them?

9. What do immigrant workers feel are their most important problems? Legal status? Higher wages? Better benefits? Better housing? Opportunities to learn a trade or a profession? Promotions or transfers? Would it be good to carry out a survey?

10. Is there a particular problem that immigrant members have with management? Does management openly discriminate? Run down the major items in your contract, and ask yourself if the immigrants are treated fairly: Are they concentrated in lower paying

jobs? Do they get as much overtime? Do they have the same opportunities for advancement? Do supervisors make racist remarks or show favoritism motivated by antipathy to foreigners?

11. Is there something the union is doing or not doing that the immigrant members feel is wrong? Does the union discriminate, either overtly or by ignoring immigrant members? Is there a particular committee of the union to which immigrant workers can take their problems?

12. Are there frictions between immigrant and native-born workers? What role can the union play in reducing these tensions?

13. What would make immigrant members feel

more welcome in the union? What would get them to take a more active role?

14. What are the main immigrant community organizations? What are the most important television and radio programs for the immigrant community? Newspapers? Religious organizations? Educational organizations? Fraternal organizations, social clubs? Who are the leaders of the immigrant community? (All of these questions can be very important in terms of contract campaigns, strikes, etc.) Is there an immigrant community center?

15. Does the union need a special committee to deal with the problems of immigrant workers? Would one of the existing committees be appropriate?



Steward's Corner — April 1986

Strong Contract Language Can Defend Immigrant Union Members

by Paul Bigman

Immigrants built this country, and immigrants built our labor movement. When times are good, immigrant workers are eagerly recruited. But when the economy begins to go sour, immigrants who have slaved to create the nation's wealth are told that they are "stealing jobs" from those of us whose parents immigrated a generation ago.

Instead of cooperating with efforts to divide our members, the labor movement must make it clear that we stand united. Strong contract language can help the union defend immigrant members.

A contract section on immigrant rights should begin with a simple statement of policy, recognizing the right of employees to be secure against harassment or intimidation by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

Specifically, the employer should agree not to release employment records, or to divulge any other information, to the INS unless the INS presents a validly-executed subpoena for the specific records or information involved. If a subpoena is presented, the company should have a clear obligation to immediately inform an appropriate union officer in the shop.

Similarly, it should be company policy that the INS will not be permitted to question any employee anywhere in the workplace unless INS serves the company with a validly-executed search warrant, naming the specific individual or individuals who the INS wants to interrogate. Again, the union should be immediately notified upon presentation of a warrant.

Avoid Intimidation

The contract should provide that under no circumstances will the company authorize INS agents to

enter work areas. Questioning should be carried out as far from work areas as possible, and be limited to individuals named in a warrant.

An employee who changes his or her name, Social Security number, or immigration status should be ensured the right to appropriate modification of company employment records without adverse consequences to seniority rights or other employment benefits. The company should be barred from disciplining, discharging or otherwise discriminating against an employee because of a pending immigration or deportation hearing.

- Full contractual rights, including protections against layoff or discharge, should be guaranteed unless and until an employee must leave the United States permanently. A worker who must leave temporarily, including for the purpose of legalizing immigration status, should be ensured re-employment with full seniority and other benefits upon return.

Lawyers

If the union can provide legal counsel for members, an attorney should represent members at INS hearings. If this is financially impractical, the union should at least be prepared to recommend competent, reasonably priced immigration lawyers.

The union should distribute to members not only the contract but also a simple handout on immigrants' rights, outlining INS procedures. Both the handout and the contract should be in the appropriate languages.

These provisions are increasingly becoming standard demands in Chicago-area contracts for several unions, including ILGWU and ACTWU.



Steward's Corner — July 1986

Strategies for Organizing Immigrant Workers

by Paul Bigman

First, the union must understand the composition of the workforce. It is not enough, for example, to know that the immigrants speak Spanish. There are substantial differences between urban Mexicans, who may be veterans of militant unions, and Latin American peasants with no prior union contact. It is equally important to know whether the immigrant workers are from a single town or neighborhood, with a shared history, or from a variety of cultural backgrounds. The union must be sensitive to long-standing ethnic prejudices among the workforce—for example, in a shop with both Lebanese Christians and Palestinians.

If it's economically feasible, the union should have an immigration lawyer ready to protect undocumented workers during an organizing drive. A letter from the attorney to the local INS office stating that the workers have legal counsel can be distributed to the workers. (Don't actually send the letter to the INS; just give workers copies to carry in case they have a run-in.) Workers should say nothing to INS until the lawyer is present.

Raid Is Unfair Practice

The union should make it clear to everyone in the shop, including management, that it is an unfair labor practice for the company to call in the INS for a raid to disrupt an organizing drive. If anyone is picked up by the INS during the drive, and there is even a suspicion that the company was involved, the union should file charges with the NLRB. Even if the charges are ultimately dismissed, the workers involved will not be deported while the charges are pending. While the union can't stop raids or deportations, we can at least cause a lengthy delay, giving the workers involved

time to maneuver.

In the event of a strike, the company may recruit scabs from the same immigrant communities as the regular workforce or from other immigrant groups. Rather than demanding deportations, the union should—as with any other group of strikebreakers—try to stop scabbing.

During an ACTWU strike in the Chicago area, the company recruited Mexican and Laotian scabs to replace Mexican and Laotian strikers. The strikers used community and family ties to pressure the scabs. Most of the scabs left after a day or two, and the strike was won in nine days.

The union should also be prepared to discuss contractual protections for undocumented workers. The organizer should supply copies of other contracts that contain these protections, or bring in undocumented union members from other shops to talk with workers.

The company almost always realizes that it is employing undocumented workers. If the union doesn't speak out forcefully, the company may spread rumors that the union will seek to deport the undocumented workers.

Above all, an organizing drive should make it clear that the union is trying to unite all workers in the shop, regardless of their national origin or citizenship status. That may mean confronting racism or anti-immigrant attitudes among union supporters. There is no place in the union movement for attacks on "foreign labor," any more than there is a place for attacks on Black or women workers.

[At the time these articles appeared in *Labor Notes*, Paul Bigman was an organizer for the Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union in Chicago. He is now an organizer for the United Electrical Workers.]

Organizing Around Women's Issues 15.

Women face problems on the job whether they work in services or industry, in women's "traditional" occupations or in "nontraditional" jobs such as the skilled trades. The majority of women have been tracked into the lower-paying sex-segregated jobs, while those who have broken into male-dominated industries are often treated as pariahs. And whatever their jobs, women workers are usually responsible for much of the childcare and the housework. A growing proportion of women—one out of five working mothers—are single heads of households with all the responsibilities of work and family.

All of this has led women to organize on the job—through women's committees, through support groups, through running for office. They have organized around specifically women's issues, such as sexual harassment and pay equity, and around representation and empowerment for women. This chapter will first discuss organizing a women's committee in a local union, and how some women's committees have helped get women involved in the union, advance women to leadership positions, and implement affirmative action. We will then discuss some examples of organizing around women's issues: sexual harassment, pay equity, time off for childcare. We have also included here a gay and lesbian committee which grew out of a women's conference in a local union, and a successful fight for benefits for "domestic partners." Finally, we will discuss cross-union support groups and women's advocacy groups.

See also the stories about La Mujer Obrera and 9to5 in Chapter 17.

Organizing a Women's Committee

A women's committee may be an informal group—ing that meets to discuss problems, a caucus which fights for women's issues, in the local, or an official

committee of the local. The Women's Organizing Committee in Local 375 of AFSCME District Council 37 in New York City began with informal meetings; the women soon decided that they should seek recognition as an official committee. The local's 7,000 members are architects, engineers, and other scientific and technical workers employed by the city, with only a small minority of women.

At that time none of the union's elected officers and only a couple of its delegates to the District Council were women. Men chaired all the standing committees. "When we would speak with the men they would claim, 'Oh, we don't have any women working in that title,'" says Eleanor Eastman, an associate chemist who has been active in the committee.

"Our president was supportive; some of the men were not too supportive, but they went along with the idea, as long as we were an organizing committee. Some feared we would be a women's lib committee, which made them feel a bit intimidated. They thought we would take things away from them, I suppose."

The first thing the group did, says Eastman, was to conduct a survey. It revealed that women made up 12 percent of the membership and gave some idea of the jobs and locations in which those women were concentrated.

"Then we tried to find out what were the needs of women in our local," Eastman explains. Another survey revealed that there were problems around comparable worth. "We did a survey in the scientific and technical fields and we found that men were promoted faster than the women, and much faster. There were only one or two women holding the higher level positions. The majority of women were just at the entry level or slightly above." Publicizing these results helped attract more women to the group.

The group used the DC 37 newspaper and Local 375 publications to attract women to meetings and forums. For example, they sponsored a Women's History Month program on workers from abroad, be-

cause many of the local's members were from the Soviet Union, China, Japan, and India. Another program was on the balancing act of childcare and elder-care.

"At the last meeting I would say we had about 50 women," estimates Eastman. "But that is a specific program. The group that works with us would be a dozen women; that's your core group. And I would tell any women's committee that you're going to find yourself working with a core group, and you will have to reach out by providing programs that will draw in those other women as much as possible. To attend monthly meetings month after month is difficult for many of them—women who have children, women who are married, commuting problems."

Eastman feels that the Women's Organizing Committee has been quite successful in getting women to seek and win leadership positions. "At the time we began we had no women officers," says Eastman. "Since then I have become recording secretary and we have another woman as chair of the political and union activities. The local is divided into chapters—each chapter comes from a specific city agency—and now we have four women chapter presidents."

The Women's Organizing Committee has also changed the attitudes of men in the local, says Eastman. "Before we organized, men would say there were no women in the local. Now that they see that we're effective, they're asking us to support their programs and the various committees."

In fact, the very success of the women's committee in promoting women into leadership leads to problems, says Eastman. "Men begin to see you are an effective woman, and when they have their programs they ask you to join them, and you do, so that you'll get their support also, because unions are political entities. So we're beginning to see that as women move into the mainstream and are involved in other programs of the local—to be on the collective bargaining committee, to be on the budget committee—that these take away time from the Women's Organizing Committee. My concern is the dilution of the women's committee by women moving up into important roles in the local."

Advancing Women to Leadership

Ann Cohen is president of AFSCME Local 1637 in Philadelphia, representing blue and pink collar city employees. Local 1637 has about 1,200 members, 35 to 40 percent of them women. "The women's committee in the local has been very, very active," says Cohen, "and resulted in our executive board being composed of seven women and three men."

"The women's committee was formed in about 1980. Traditionally, whenever anything happened in the local, a banquet or an election, who did they get to run it, the male-dominated union? They got the women to do it, because the women were the ones with the organizational skills."

The women's committee was formed so that

women could educate each other and advance both within and outside the union. "The women's committee organized all sorts of things to raise money—family photo days, Tupperware sales—and sent themselves to schools," says Cohen. "They sent me to Union Leadership Academy run by the AFL-CIO and Penn State, a two-year program. They have, after me, sent three or four other women through Union Leadership Academy and countless other educational activities."

"The women's committee sent me to a PHILAPOSH conference on health and safety, and that's when I really became active around health and safety issues, and then ran for steward, and subsequently ran for local union president."

A Women's Committee in a Mostly-Male Factory

During the 1970s Marcia Hams worked as a machinist at the General Electric plant in Lynn, Massachusetts and was a member of IUE Local 201. The company had about 8,000 workers in three plants, producing aircraft engines and steam turbines.

"I started in the plant in 1976," Hams remembers. "There had not been women on the apprentice floor until two or three years earlier, so it was quite a new thing."

"The women met on an ad hoc basis for a while, and then eventually we made it one of the standing committees of the local. There was a strong committee structure in that local, so it helped to make it a standing committee. It allowed us to go out into the shop and organize to get that into the constitution, which was a good opportunity to raise the issues with everyone in the plant, which was predominantly men."

The Women's Committee took on many issues, says Hams. "The women in the committee acted as stewards for women in the plant who had problems, and worked with members of the executive board to get them to take those problems seriously."

"Pregnancy disability was important all along. We wrote a pamphlet about pregnancy rights which was helpful in training stewards. And then we fought some cases both through the union contract and the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination and won disability for a number of women."

"We had problems in the Wilmington plant, which was an instrument plant, predominantly women, whereas the bigger plant was predominantly men producing heavy equipment. The rate structure in the Wilmington plant had always been much lower. The women's committee took up that issue as well."

"The local ended up filing a suit against GE for comparable worth. A well-known discrimination lawyer in Boston became the independent counsel for the plaintiffs as well. It was important that she was independent and that the Women's Committee had a relationship with her as well, to allow the plaintiffs to have much more of a voice."

"The result of that sex discrimination suit was not only a change of rates for Wilmington, but it also addressed other issues: pregnancy disability and getting a secondary job posting system for positions that

became available because of transfers, which we had never had. It was one of the ways in which women and people of color didn't find out about positions which were available. The settlement also set up training programs in areas like machine repair, welding, skilled jobs where there was a disproportionately low number of women.

"The Women's Committee and I worked on the implementation of those training programs with the affirmative action director for the company. We ran a jobs fair at the union hall and we had some of us that had been machinists there to talk about what it was like to be a machinist and what kind of skills it was going to involve and we had a math anxiety workshop. We did those nuts and bolts things that you have to do for people to feel that they can even sign up."

Fighting Sexual Harassment

This section is about collective action a union can take against sexual harassment rather than advice for individual victims.

One obstacle unions must overcome when dealing with sexual harassment is the notion that it is just an individual problem—whether it's seen as the man's problem ("he's just going through change of life") or the woman's ("she asked for it by going into that department"). There is also a widespread tendency to downplay the importance of sexual harassment ("he was just flirting"), and to confuse it with sexual desire rather than the power game that it really is.

The IUE Local 201 Women's Committee was strongly backed up both by rank and file men and by the union leadership in dealing with sexual harassment. Marcia Hams remembers, "We had a pretty outrageous incident: a couple of managers attacked a woman they were taking out to lunch on National Secretaries Day. She reported the incident to her steward, and there was a wildcat strike in her area, led by men.

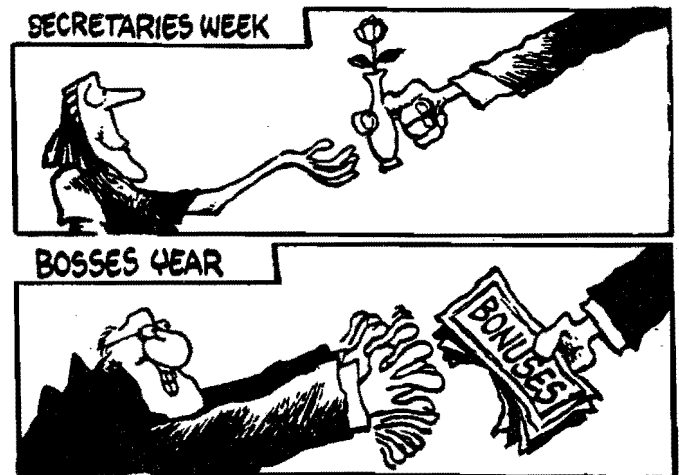
"Twenty-two people received one-day suspensions because of the wildcat, and a hundred got disciplinary letters. The next membership meeting was packed. After a report from the Women's Committee the members voted to call an immediate meeting of the Stewards Council, about 200 stewards. The Council demanded that the two managers be fired—they had just gotten a slap on the wrist—and that a committee be set up to do publicity and plan a demonstration. It became a broader issue than something the Women's Committee per se was taking up, which was good." Petitions were circulated in the shop demanding that the managers be fired and all discipline against union members be rescinded. The local held a press conference and a demonstration at the plant gate; demonstrators then went to the home of the head of GE labor relations.

"We ended up working with a rape crisis center to train stewards on sexual harassment issues," says Hams. "The executive board allocated money to bring them in to do training, and it did a lot to raise the con-

sciousness in the whole plant and among all the stewards."

Halting Harassment in the Hotels

Hotel Employees/Restaurant Employees (HERE) Local 26's contract with the big hotels in Boston has some of the strongest language on sexual harassment in any union agreement, as well as an awareness pro-



gram. It won these because it has women leaders and an active women's committee. Janice Loux is the vice-president and benefits officer of Local 26 and the chairperson of its Women's Committee.

"Sexual harassment is rampant throughout the hotels," says Loux. "We believe that there is a higher incidence of sexual harassment in the hotel industry than there is in any other job situation. Perhaps it's because there's a certain atmosphere: liquor, late hours, conventioners away from home who make certain assumptions. And those assumptions are that you're supposed to be nice to the guests.

"The local had taken a very strong position on it, but we felt that we had to start from the base of the union. The direction we took was to raise the consciousness not only of our own members, but of the hotels and the managers. We organized an educational campaign, trying to establish standards, raising the consciousness of our own membership that sexual harassment is no longer acceptable in the workforce." Among other things, the local published a pamphlet.

"We had to force the hotels to establish policies," says Loux. "So we worked on putting in stronger contract language, the first in 1982, and progressively strengthening it as we went along." The 1988 agreement requires the hotels to run an awareness program for all employees and supervisors each year. Employers must give "priority consideration" to sexual harassment grievances and harassment because of sexual preference is banned. The local has also produced a slide show on sexual harassment and done a membership survey in four languages.

"We took a pretty radical position on it," says Loux, "that if a case is substantiated, then the person is terminated, whether it be a manager or a worker. And if it's a guest, then we demand that the guest is

barred from that hotel permanently." In one case the union went to the company that the guest worked for and had him fired.

Striking for Pay Equity

During the 1970s and 80s the concept of pay equity—the right to equal pay for jobs of comparable worth—became a new way of arguing for higher pay in traditionally "women's jobs." Clerical workers, nurses, librarians all asserted that their work was worth as much to the employer as many traditionally "men's jobs" such as mechanic or truck driver, and that therefore their jobs should be paid as much as "men's jobs."

The key issue of the 1987 strike of the Oregon Public Employees Union, SEIU Local 503, was pay equity. That strike is detailed in Chapter 9. The statewide local carried out a series of dramatic rolling strikes with whistle-blowing flying squads shutting down office buildings and garages in one city after another.

The organizing for the strike began long in advance, including education of the membership on what pay equity meant and why men workers should back the demand as well. Sue Wall, an SEIU organizer, remembers, "Pay equity affected really the entire state. About 60 percent of our membership is clerical workers.

"It took a lot of internal educating in small steps so that everybody understood the importance of achieving comparable worth for the women. We had some traditional men in men's jobs who didn't understand the whole concept and thought, why should these women who work in an office be paid the same as me in digging ditches? That was a hurdle to get over!"

So the union brought the male and female workers from different departments face to face to discuss the matter. "The women explained just exactly how much they made," Wall remembers, "because there's this whole mythology of not talking about the amount of money you make. That was the first step.

"Then we pointed out that most of those women qualified for public assistance. Here they are public employees, and they're on some form of welfare—housing subsidies, food stamps, school lunch program. We pointed out that they were not only brothers and sisters in the union but that *literally* the women were these men's wives and daughters, possibly the third generation. We made the one-on-one connection with folks."

In the end, the local went into its rolling strikes unified. It won pay equity increases for 5,000 members, and another 4,700 members whose pay was behind that of comparable employees, from prison guards to social workers, were also brought up.

Pay Equity as a Racial Issue Too

Margarita Aguilar works in the continuing education office of New York University (NYU) and is vice-

president (formerly president) of 1,500-member AFT Local 3882, the United Staff Association of NYU.

"We represent all the clerical and technical workers," explains Aguilar. "We're 70 percent women, 50 percent Black and Hispanic, and we have an annual turnover of about 33 percent.

"Before our last contract we compared our salaries to the other workers at the university. We were the lowest paid, and our highest paid made less than the service workers, the porters or the guards. While we were always careful to say that they deserved a decent salary, we argued that we did also. We tried, also using the whole equity appeal, to gather support from faculty and students. If NYU thinks so little of their secretaries and the turnover is so great, it hinders services for them also. Faculty know they have a new secretary every year and they have to keep teaching her the ropes.

"When we talk about equity we discuss the fact that besides being sex discrimination it is race discrimination. NYU can get by with lower salaries because they have such a large minority workforce. There is a lot of feeling that as an employer NYU is fairly racist. The student population, Black or Hispanic, is almost nil. The faculty have very few Blacks or Hispanics, and there are no deans, or anybody higher than that who are not white and male. So all you see is that the people who are servicing white students, faculty and administration are predominantly or half Black and Hispanic."

The union did not do a detailed study of pay rates on the campus; it simply argued that whatever raise other workers received, the clerical and technical workers should receive a larger one to make up for past inequities.

In 1988 the union went on strike over pay equity. Eleven hundred of 1,500 members voted to strike, most struck, and many stayed out for the entire 21 days. Says Aguilar, "Many people didn't think we would ever strike, or could ever sustain a strike, or ever would come back with any gains, and we did all three."

For another example of a successful strike for pay equity, see the story of the Yale University clerical and technical workers in Chapter 20.

Textile Workers Win Time Off for Childcare

In early 1990, after a one-week strike, workers in ACTWU Local 777 at Monterey Mills in Janesville, Wisconsin won improvements in their contract language which will give them more time for their children.¹

The organizing began a few months before when Janet Cook, president of nearby ACTWU Local 1871, took a union leave of absence to help out the sisters and brothers at Monterey Mills. Cook's job was to help Local 777 with an internal organizing campaign to prepare for the coming contract.

"We did house-calling," said Cook, "and I worked one-on-one with people, and got people talking with one another." The local formed committees and used shift meetings, plant maps, large calendars, surveys and phone trees to plan and carry out the campaign.

The contract proposals came out of a survey. "There are a lot of single mothers and single fathers," Cook explains, "and they were having trouble getting off work to take their children to the doctor. So one of the things we looked at was getting them more vacation time, and also being able to take a week's vacation and split it up as single days."



Members of ACTWU Local 777 rally near the headquarters of Monterey Mills.

Management meanwhile hired an anti-union law firm and refused to accept the union's demands. Local 777 began to do informational picketing downtown in front of the corporate office. "I learned that the union is not only something for me, but it involves my family too," said Stephanie Sawle, a member of Local 777's negotiating committee. "One night my children and I worked together painting colorful posters for a demonstration at the corporate headquarters of Monterey Mills. My children enjoy these projects—these union projects—and so do I."

"In fact we got the community involved in it," says Cook. "We leafleted the whole community. It was like a letter to the community talking about the single parents that needed time off for their sick children. We had them calling the company telling them, 'We all live in this town and these people need a good place to work, they need time off with their kids.'" The members leafleted supermarkets and at the gates of union plants.

In an attempt to put more pressure on the company, Local 777 met with Congressman Les Aspin as well as local and state politicians. The legislators then contacted the company and urged a just settlement. Still management did not yield.

"So we did end up going out on strike," says Cook. During the strike other unions gave food and money.

Besides substantial raises and other gains, Local 777 won an extra week of paid vacation and the right

to take it a day at a time, so members could use vacation time to visit their children's teachers or go to the doctor. Workers may also take two unpaid days a year for doctor visits without being penalized under the company's absentee policy.

A video committee made an 18-minute video about the internal organizing campaign and sent it to a sister local in Cowan, Tennessee which was soon to begin negotiating with Monterey Mills. A copy was also sent to SACTWU, ACTWU's sister union in South Africa.

Creating a Gay and Lesbian Committee

SEIU Local 509 in Massachusetts has created an official Gay and Lesbian Concerns Committee (GLCC—pronounced "glick"). Local 509 is a 9,500-member statewide local, slightly more women than men, which represents professionals employed by the state, mostly social workers. For several years the local has had both a women's committee and a civil rights committee, though the latter has not always been active.

Ginny Cutting is a social worker for the Rehabilitation Commission, where she handles an AIDS caseload. She is a member of the local's executive board and co-chair of the women's committee. She was one of the organizers of GLCC.

"The women's committee does a day-long conference every year," says Cutting, "where our members get paid time from the state to attend. A couple of years ago we decided to do a workshop at this conference called 'Coming Out in the Workplace.' A dozen women came in, and we talked about what it was like to be out and some of the issues we had to deal with."

One of the issues, says Cutting, is invisibility. "In the workplace you're always hearing gay jokes or queer jokes. Then people started telling stories about not getting promotions, not getting transfers because they are gay. One of the women in the group told how she had been harassed by another worker who kept leaving things in her cubicle, and then finally one day there was a pile of dog shit sitting on her desk. Other people talked about notes being left on their desks. Some of them were successful in dealing with it, and some of them weren't, and people wanted a place to come where they could talk about these issues and strategize on how to deal with them."

The women who attended that workshop were also concerned about contract language. "The anti-discrimination clause in our contract had no language around sexual orientation. The local has proposed that language in several of the last contracts, but they have not been able to get it from the state. We thought that that should be a major push. We also thought we should be taking a look at bereavement leave in the contract, and also what used to be the 'childcare' article and change it to a 'dependent care'

article, so that we were better able to care for our loved ones, whether they be elderly parents, children, or lovers. And we're having more and more of our members who are testing HIV positive, so insurance is starting to come to the forefront for us also."

After the workshop the women decided to continue to meet, and to invite gay men. "We were initially called the 'Gay and Lesbian Concerns Caucus' because we weren't a committee of the local," Cushing explains. "We met for approximately a year and a half and during this time the contract came up, and we proposed a whole series of language changes."

A dozen members of the Caucus attended an executive board meeting, and the board voted to make GLCC a standing committee with funding of \$1,500 a year. "There is now an arm of the local," says Cushing, "namely GLCC, that can push along with other committees to get language changes in the contract."

"In other words, it isn't always the women's committee who is going to be dealing with these family issues, such as the change in dependent care—you've got GLCC who's doing it too. They're coming at it from two similar but different directions. The two committees coming together are more powerful. The civil rights committee is getting its feet on the ground in our local. We have talked to them about the possibility of doing anti-racism, anti-homophobia training together."

"I would like to encourage more people to form these kinds of committees," says Cutting, "although it's real hard. Coming out in the workplace is taking a big risk. We have members who will not come to the union office for a meeting, because they don't want to be identified with the committee. If we do social events or meetings outside of the office they'll come to them. Every other committee does a day-long conference; we could do a day-long conference, except when we ask for time off from the state, everybody that goes will be identifying as gay, lesbian or bisexual. So it means that we have to do our workshops on the weekend and it's harder to get to them."

"Part of what we want to do is just let people know that we're out there. If you have some of the problems that I laid out earlier, we're one of the groups that you should be contacting."

Gay and Lesbian Caucus Wins Bereavement Leave

In Alameda County, California, union activists formed the Gay and Lesbian Caucus of SEIU Local 616 to press for benefits for domestic partners. In 1989 they succeeded in winning bereavement leave for county employees in three SEIU locals.²

Their strategy included phone calls and letters to the County Board of Supervisors from gay political groups. Caucus members appeared before community groups, got mailing lists of supportive organizations, and pressured candidates.

The campaign within the union broadened the issue to include unmarried heterosexual couples, as previous experience in the city of Berkeley showed

that the majority of employees who took advantage of "domestic partner" status were not gay. Union bulletins featured personal stories from gay and straight members about the hardships imposed on them by not having the benefits that were taken for granted by married couples.

The contract language defines a domestic partnership as a relationship between two persons regardless of gender who live together and share the common necessities of life.

The locals failed in that round to win their proposals on family sick leave and health plan benefits. As Tess Ewing, whose own bus drivers local in Boston had won bereavement leave in 1983, commented, "Bereavement leave for domestic partners is a relatively cheap way for employers to look liberal and beneficent. Health insurance, sick leave—any benefit that we can enjoy while we're all still alive—that will be a whole different ball game!"³

A Nontraditional Jobs Support Group

Ideally it is best to fight discrimination in the workplace and with the power of the local union, but sometimes fellow workers or union leaders are so sexist themselves that little headway can be made on the inside. This has often been the experience of women in non-traditional jobs. In some cities they have created support groups where women from different workplaces can come together.

Mary Baird, a service technician for Ohio Bell in Cleveland and an activist in the Communications Workers union, was one of the founders of Hard Hatted Women. "One of our major issues is that women are isolated," says Baird. "At a worksite we're usually a minority of one. And unfortunately, even with all the federal regulations that came in the 1970s, our numbers and status haven't really changed. So when we organize around an issue—maybe it's getting pornography removed from the workplace, or maybe it's fighting sexual harassment—we're organizing self-defense." In 1975, women were .85 percent of workers in nontraditional blue collar jobs. By 1989 that percentage was still under two percent.

The Cleveland Hard Hatted Women's group began when Baird and two other women, a truck driver and a steelworker, got together to talk about their difficulties. All three were union activists with some organizing experience and they decided to build a women's support group.

"So we wrote an article for a local women's newspaper called *What She Wants*, and we advertised a meeting date. Using the media, we drummed up two or three more people, and then we kind of collected people," says Baird.

"We wanted to open up some construction jobs in Cleveland. There was a lot of construction going on, but at the time very few women were being hired. One of the ways we built our group was to do an action around one of those situations. SOHIO was building its national headquarters here. We spent maybe a



United Tradeswomen demonstrate in New York City for equal employment opportunity.

year and a half going through all the channels trying to get more jobs for women. We went to the Office of Federal Contract Compliance. We went to the affirmative action officers of the company. We went to see the contractors and their affirmative action people.

"We kept getting put off, so we said the heck with it. We called a rally down at Public Square at rush hour, and the media came out. Women in hard hats is a novelty and it's very easy to get publicity. So we called a couple other women's groups in to work with us and had a press conference. The Coalition of Labor Union Women was there, the Council of Unemployed Workers was there. As a result three or four women suddenly got on in the next couple of weeks. It was a small victory, and it was a way of attracting people and building the group."

Hard Hatted Women, Baird says, "used to be fairly exclusive and clear cut that we were blue collar workers and in the trades. But if we kept to ourselves we would reincarnate the isolation that we're trying to fight. We're much broader now." Today Hard Hatted Women has auto workers, factory workers, welders, telephone workers, employees of Cleveland Public Power, and computer technicians, among others. The group also has an advisory network of women who have experience working with public agencies or not-for-profit organizations.

"We have a lot of supporting members," says Baird. "We have a woman from '9to5,' which is a women office workers' organization. And we have women who are thinking about changing careers; they join us to see what they're going to go through."

One issue Hard Hatted Women has faced squarely is lesbian-baiting. Lesbian-baiting, like red-baiting or race-baiting, is an attempt to stigmatize a fellow worker, to mark her as different and make a pariah out of her. It often has little or nothing to do with the sexual preference of the person involved.

Baird urges a frank discussion of this issue in a women's group. "Our group is very diverse in terms of age, race, and sexual preference," says Baird, "and we work on that in a very conscious way. Recently two women ran an excellent support meeting on the question of diversity, from the point of view of being a lesbian in a group like ours. That was a real healthy thing for our group, that's part of how we build unity. We don't emphasize our differences, but we try to be open about them so people can support each other."

Darlene Owens joined Pipefitters Local 120 over ten years ago. As a Black woman she was often a minority of one on the job. Incidents of sexist hazing and discrimination led her to join Hard Hatted Women. "I've learned so much," Owens says. "They've been there, they've been supportive, and I feel that

I'm not alone out there. Whatever problems or confrontations I come up with, if I can't deal with them, then I know that somebody in the group is going to give me some advice to support me."

By being a member of Hard Hatted Women, says Owens, she is "trying to help some other women that might try to do this. After ten years of being out here, I see more women out here, and I think those of us that broke through have set an example for the rest of them that are coming along. I hope it's going to be a little easier for the rest of the women."

Women's Advocacy Group

In some cities non-profit agencies exist specifically to advocate for women workers, especially those who are not unionized. Women on the Job of Long Island, New York, is one such group.

Women on the Job was founded in 1981 by Lillian McCormick and Charlotte Shapiro, beginning with a foundation grant. They did a feasibility study to determine what could be done for women in low-paying, sex-segregated jobs. They also organized a

Building A Support Group for Women in Nontraditional Jobs

(Following is a condensed version of a presentation made by Hard Hatted Women at the Second National Tradeswomen Conference, held in Chicago in May 1989.)

Building a support group for women in and seeking nontraditional jobs can be relatively simple. All you need to start are two or three women like yourself. Here are a few ideas based on our experience over the past ten years in Cleveland:

1. Decide on a name and compose an identity statement: tell WHO you are and WHY you exist. You may want to begin as an informal support group, expanding your activities as you grow.

2. Set a meeting date, possibly at a YWCA, church or union hall.

3. Publicize the meeting: women's bookstores, unions, women's newspaper, community bulletin board, local newspapers. Include a number and first name to contact for info; also, provide childcare if needed. We pass the hat to pay for teenagers to watch younger children.

4. As soon as your meeting attracts a "critical mass" (six to eight), begin more outreach, recruitment, publicity:

- a) Elect a steering committee to plan and publicize meetings.

- b) Build a mailing list and phone tree.

- c) Begin a simple newsletter (bi-monthly has worked for us).

- d) Establish a dues structure.

- e) Plan a public event for outreach (our first event was a film showing in a church basement). Bill it as the official "launching" of your group—try for media coverage, interviews in advance.

- f) Have "business cards" printed with the group's name, purpose and a contact number. We love these—give them to friends to hand to women they might see working construction.

- g) Plan fundraising events—a dance, direct solicitation, raffle, auction, flea market booth, product sales, ads in the newsletter.

- h) Take advantage of free resources—donations of meeting space, video or movie equipment, legal advice.

- i) Build solidarity and an effective working relationship among members—take longer periods of time out periodically for support, relaxation and serious planning sessions. We have weekend

retreats at least annually—we prefer twice a year.

- j) Set up a speakers bureau to respond to requests or find opportunities to talk to students and community groups.

- k) Think about establishing yourselves as a non-profit organization with tax-exempt status (crucial for funding).

5. Network in your community, especially with other working women's groups (CLUW, 9to5, etc.), campus women's groups/departments. Joint fundraisers, forums on sexual harassment or childcare, press conferences are all effective. One time we marched with the city bus drivers union, protesting unsafe working conditions—women drivers had been harassed and assaulted on the job.

6. Use the media to make yourself known—TV and radio talk shows are usually quite receptive to women in such "unique" careers.

7. Locate women through unions, apprenticeship programs, technical or vocational schools, women's "comprehensive" or "displaced homemakers" programs on campuses.

8. Women will call after seeing you on TV and want to know, "How can I get a job like that?"

- a) Develop of list of places to refer them to: employment agencies, job training programs, technical schools, apprenticeship classes, etc.

- b) Collect tips and information from employers who want to hire women.

- c) Designate a central person who keeps lists of opportunities for women. (We try to convince people we are NOT an employment agency.)

- d) Offer orientation sessions on what to expect in nontraditional jobs, or even hands-on workshops on fitness/strength training, tool use, etc. One project we worked on was rehabbing an old house—several women were trained in basic carpentry, electrical, plumbing, painting skills this way.

9. Develop an advisory network—labor attorneys; government, school or business EEO officers, counselors; union organizers; fundraisers or board members of other nonprofit organizations; personnel directors. Get these women to join your group as supporting members.

10. Feel free to contact HHW of Cleveland anytime! We wish you success—hammer away! (Hard Hatted Women, Box 93384, Cleveland, Ohio 44101. Hotline: 216/961-4449)

women's Task Force to act as a pressure group and lobbying organization in support of Women on the Job.

Among the 51 member organizations are the American Association of University Women, AFSCME District Council 1707, the American Nurses Association, Civil Service Employees Association Local 830, Communications Workers District 1, Long Island Center for Business and Professional Women, NAACP, NOW, and many others. Based on their research, *Newsday* newspaper ran a two-page article on the discrimination that women on Long Island faced, particularly in the public sector. "The phones started ringing," says McCormick.

One group which contacted Women on the Job was the Glen Cove Educational Secretaries and Aides (which subsequently became Teamster Local 810). The Task Force was mobilized in support of the secretaries and aides, who were dissatisfied with their wages compared to their male fellow workers.

"People from the Task Force wrote letters, they attended the school board meetings with the women from the workplace," McCormick remembers. "At the board meetings they helped them with the petitions. We had rallies. They marched around the building. They did the petitions in their neighborhoods. This is an example of what can be done. But the most important thing is to get the women in a cohesive, strong group and moving together." The Glen Cove workers won a more equitable pay scale and other improvements.

Women on the Job was also contacted by Suffolk County public health nurses, who were represented by



the Civil Service Employees Association, an AFSCME affiliate. McCormick says that at first unions did not welcome Women on the Job.

"When we first started this project it was very difficult, because the unions didn't know where we were coming from, and they weren't sure we weren't going to be a union and take over all the clerical units on the Island. But that was not what we had in our head. We are an advocacy group."

Women on the Job carried out a pressure campaign for the nurses, again mobilizing the Task Force, and again helped win higher wages.

"Now," says McCormick, "CSEA realizes that we are an important ingredient, because we are a much broader, extensive group; we represent thousands of women on the Island through our Task Force."

Women on the Job also helped Head Start workers in Suffolk County by organizing strike support. The strike went on for several months and in the

end the Head Start workers won higher wages. Women on the Job has aided groups of women ranging from police trainees to college faculty to social workers to clerical workers. They helped women in one town get access to the previously "men's" job of water meter reader.

When representatives of Women on the Job meet with a group of workers, they ask questions aimed at helping the women better understand their situation: What is your grievance mechanism? What do your personnel records say? Are policies posted? Is there a sexual harassment policy? Is there sexual harassment training?

McCormick says, "We give them choices. There are many choices; the most important thing is, do they have a union? And if they don't, get a union in there and make it strong."

The Coalition of Labor Union Women

The Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), founded in 1974, can serve as a resource for local activists. "CLUW is a national membership organization of union members working to promote women's issues within the labor movement and to promote working women's issues in the society," explains Sandy Pope, CLUW's executive director.

CLUW has 20,000 members organized in about sixty chapters. Individual women or men may join a local CLUW chapter or may affiliate directly as national members.

Pope explains some of CLUW's work: "If there's a local union that wants to start a program, such as a women's committee or an education program, we have people in many states or nearby that can go and help them put together a program on work and family issues, sexual harassment, discrimination, starting a women's committee, running for office. Many of our members have undergone training programs through CLUW or through their own unions, and we try to get them to, in turn, speak or conduct workshops."

CLUW is active on minority women's issues. "Fifty percent of our leadership is minority women," says Pope. "We have a minority issues committee that works on issues of importance to women of color, and this last meeting they decided to make a priority of pro-choice."

"We also have an affirmative action committee—which is going to have a tough job ahead of them—a family issues committee, and we deal with substance abuse, health and safety issues, a number of different things."

"A lot of what we do is share our experiences, teach each other, encourage each other to run for office, to get more active in the union and to take on leadership responsibilities, and that's been a successful element of CLUW over the last 15 years."

To contact CLUW and the other organizations mentioned in this chapter see Appendix E.

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Just like any other group in society, women workers improve their situation in only one way—by organizing. Women will have to determine what forms of organization are necessary—caucuses or union committees or independent support committees outside of the official union structure. And women must continue to organize on their own behalf whether or not men yet understand and support their efforts. It is the persistent activism of the last twenty years that has led many male union members to sympathize with their sisters' struggle for justice. And it is only through continued activism that greater unity between union sisters and brothers will be achieved.

Action Questions

1. What percentage of your workforce is women? If you do not know, how can you find out? Where are women workers located? Are they segregated by job title? Are they paid equally? Are they promoted and transferred fairly?

2. What is the role of women in the union? Are there women on the executive board, on the bargaining committee, in staff positions, on important committees, as stewards?

3. Is there an existing committee in the union that should be dealing with women's issues? Is there a women's committee? A civil rights or human rights committee? Does the International union have a women's department or civil rights department?

4. Is there language in your contract on sexual harassment? On pay equity (comparable worth)? On non-discrimination? On domestic partner benefits? How is it enforced?

5. Has the union conducted a survey to find out what is on women's minds? How could you conduct such a survey? Through the union newspaper? Prepared by a committee? (Remember that when you make a survey you may raise expectations, you may threaten management, and you have already begun organizing!)

6. Make a list of 10 questions you would want to ask women about their concerns about their work and the union.

7. Perhaps even without having done a survey, you have an idea of the more pressing issues. Rank the

following issues (and any others you can think of) in terms of what you think women in your workplace would want to do something about.

Issue	Rank
1) Wages and comparable worth	—
2) Health benefits	—
3) Hours, shifts, and time flexibility	—
4) Working conditions	—
5) Health and safety hazards	—
6) Education and training opportunities	—
7) Promotion and transfer opportunities	—
8) Childcare	—
9) Sexual harassment	—

If you were going to choose one or two issues to organize around, which ones would they be?

8. Are there issues that should be written up as grievances? Would they be more effective as group grievances or if supported by a petition? Do you need to do some talking with other union members before you write a grievance, to get their ideas?

9. Who are the outspoken women or natural leaders you should be talking to? Are there women on the executive board or women stewards with whom you should be in touch?

10. How is your union executive board likely to react if you start organizing the women? Who will oppose you? Who might be won over? Who will support you from the first? What can you do to neutralize your opponents?

11. Are there women's organizations in your community (such as NOW), or perhaps at a local college, that might support the women in your workplace in a particular struggle?

12. Is there a CLUW chapter in your area?

13. Would women in your workplace benefit from belonging to an informal support group drawn from various workplaces? How would you make the initial contacts to start such a group?

Notes

- Besides an interview with Janet Cook, information comes from ACTWU's newspaper *Labor Unity*, May-June 1990, and from its Midwest newsletter *Advance*, Spring 1990.
- Kay Eisenhower, "Service Employees Locals Win Limited 'Domestic Partner' Benefits," *Labor Notes* #127, October 1989.
- Tess Ewing, "Domestic Partner Contract Language," letter to *Labor Notes* #130, January 1990.



Steward's Corner — September 1985

Helping Your Co-Workers Stop Sexual Harassment

by Sandy Pope

As many as 80 percent of women workers say they have experienced sexual harassment at the workplace in some way. In the late 1970's, many women came forward to tell their stories and to push for protection in the form of laws, company policies and union grievance procedures.

In response to this pressure, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) adopted

guidelines which equated sexual harassment with sex discrimination, thereby making it illegal under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. These guidelines state that it is an employer's responsibility to maintain a harassment-free environment for its workers.

It is the union's responsibility to handle complaints of sexual harassment by management against a worker as it would any other grievance.

Attitude

Understanding that *anyone* can be a victim is the first step. Harassers often choose as their targets those who have the least power or self-confidence to fight back, such as women who are supporting families alone or younger workers.

Victims often blame themselves and are very embarrassed, especially if they don't have witnesses. It may take a long time, or even the imposition of disciplinary action by the harasser, before they'll bring it up to the steward.

It is very important for the steward to be non-judgmental about why the person waited so long or whether she asked for it. Go investigate!

In your initial interview with the grievant, get as many details as possible about all incidents of harassment, including dates, times, places and witnesses. Find out if anyone else has been harassed by the same person. Have the grievant write out as much as she can remember of the specific language used, any physical or verbal threats, and attempts she made to stop the unwanted attention.

You and the grievant may decide simply to confront the harasser and tell him to stop. Make him aware that his actions are a violation of the contract and the law and that if he persists, you will either go to his boss or use legal or contractual recourse.

If the grievant is a probationary employee or there is a threat of disciplinary action against her, it is helpful to also have evidence of a good work record, including at previous jobs.

If you are going ahead with a grievance when there is no specific contract language regarding sexual harassment, you should cite a violation of the anti-dis-

crimination clause.

Remember, the law interprets sexual harassment as discrimination. Therefore this clause supersedes any provision allowing the company to fire probationary workers for any reason.

Follow Through

In making a good case, it's important to have witnesses or other victims to testify. But even if it's her word against management's, follow through to document a formal complaint in case it comes up again. Also, the exposure of the incidents just may be enough to stop the harassment.

Publicizing the grievance (with the grievant's permission), whether won or lost, may help bring forward other victims and will show that the union is serious about dealing with the problem.

Solutions range from a promise that it won't happen again, to disciplinary action or transfer of the harasser, to education of all management personnel. The grievant may still use the EEOC if she is not satisfied with the outcome.

If the harasser is a co-worker, a different tack is needed after the woman initially tells him to stop (with the steward present if necessary). The steward should make the harasser aware that she or he is prepared to take the problem to the local union executive board. Some constitutions allow fines or penalties for "conduct unbecoming a union member." If the harasser understands that the union and co-workers take it seriously, he's much more likely to stop. Education is in order here also.

Prevention

1. Post a flyer or newsletter article outlining what sexual harassment is and steps to fight it.
2. Publicize the union's position and possibly past grievances.
3. Do an educational program for union members and push management to have one for themselves. There are many films and other resources available, including some from international unions.
4. Get a specific clause in your contract prohibiting sexual harassment.

As we well know, management is trying hard to divide us against each other while pushing for concessions and to bust our unions. We can't allow sexual harassment at work to be passed off as "just a women's issue." It's a union priority to eliminate problems that prevent us from working together to gain more control over our lives.

[When this Stewards Corner appeared in Labor Notes, Sandy Pope was a truck driver and a member of Teamsters Local 407 in Cleveland. She is now Executive Director of the Coalition of Labor Union Women. She appears in a film produced by the UAW Women's Department, *Would You Let Someone Do This to Your Sister?* See Appendix E.]

Steps for Individual Victims

Sexual harassment is any sexual attention that is *unwanted* or is not freely and mutually agreeable to both parties. It includes, but is not limited to, leering, pinching, patting, verbal comments, subtle pressure for sexual activity, repeated propositions for dates, sexually suggestive objects or pictures in the workplace, sexual jokes, unwanted body contact, attempted rape, and rape.

1. Confront the harasser—make it clear you don't want this sexual attention.
2. Keep a journal or record of harassing behavior, including what happened, times, date, place, and witnesses.
3. Ask co-workers if they have been harassed too.
4. Write a letter to your harasser, being very specific about incidents, and tell him to stop. Keep a copy.
5. Contact your union steward.



Steward's Corner — February 1989

Combating Pornography In the Workplace

by Mary Baird

Pornography in the workplace is a particular concern for women in job environments traditionally dominated by men: construction shanties, tool rooms, locker areas, truck cabs, etc. Of course, women in white collar jobs might also find "calendar girls" above the boss's desk, lewd photos appearing mysteriously in desk drawers, junior execs huddling nearby to scan the latest Hustler centerfold.

Women find pornography—photos and graffiti depicting naked women in sexually provocative poses—especially degrading when displayed in the workplace.

It is even worse when it is purposely flaunted *because* we are there. Sometimes our names are attached to the obscenities. We feel more than just "offended"—we feel victimized, symbolically raped. At the very least, we experience these displays as warnings that "women don't belong here."

A Form of Sexual Harassment

Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) guidelines under Title VII protect us from having to work in a sexually hostile or intimidating environment. Jobsite pornography is perhaps the most concrete and easily identifiable form of sexual harassment.

Fighting jobsite porn, however, is not as clear cut as the EEO guidelines might suggest. Terry Floren, a firefighter and editor of *Firework*, the monthly newsletter of Women In Fire Suppression, explains the contradiction:

The most common reaction, when I objected to sexist literature being displayed in the restroom, was, "You said you wanted to be just one of the guys—now you're asking for special treatment saying we can't put something up because it offends you...." It's rather ironic that their acceptance of a woman as a co-worker and equal should hinge, in this instance, on her acceptance of other women as less than people—as sexual objects....

As Floren states elsewhere, "For women in non-traditional careers, the pornography issue represents the constant struggle between identity and adaptation, between personal integrity and the desire to get along with others."

Range of Tactics

Following is a range of tactics women have used to deal with workplace pornography.

- **Ignore it**, especially if the material is not blatantly displayed, or is found only infrequently in obscure locations.

- **Leave the room** when the men look at their magazines—make a definitive but quiet statement.

- **Express your discomfort.** Calmly tell your co-workers that you find it offensive and you want it removed. Or share your objections privately with one co-worker you trust. The "macho pressure" of the group setting may cause your statement to backfire.

- **Counter-post nude men.** In some cases, the shock value of this action has caused both genders of sexually exploitative material to vanish!

- **Play paper dolls**—"dress up" the nude women. One firefighter took an old stack of *Firehouse* magazines and cut out uniforms or turnout gear for each woman on a cheesecake calendar that had appeared in her station. The nudes evolved into well-dressed officers, including one who became the firechief. Needless to say, this creative woman's artwork mysteriously disappeared! Sometimes humor is the best medicine.

- **Enlist union support.** Most contracts contain anti-discrimination clauses and the reps should be aware that policing the contract includes demanding a harassment-free workplace.

- **Request an advocacy letter** from a local women's group like NOW, CLUW or a tradeswomen's organization. Sometimes if the situation is too sensitive or potentially explosive, this is the best way to remain anonymous, while putting the responsible party (management) on notice that they need to take action to avoid legal sanctions.

Advocacy Letter

Here's an excerpt from a letter that Hard Hatted Women of Cleveland sends to employers when a woman requests it:

It has come to our attention that graphic material of a sexual nature is being displayed in the work environment at _____. Because of this, you are in violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. You are also in violation of state laws governing discrimination.

As part of your responsibility for ensuring a harassment-free work environment, your company is obligated by law to remove all items of a sexual nature. Should you fail to comply, your employees have the right to file a charge against you with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The public has the right to file a complaint against you with the Ohio Civil Rights Commission.

In one case, we received a very polite letter from the company, stating that since we had not specified the exact location of the offensive pictures, they were unable to "make a determination of culpability." We were assured, however, that the complaint would be investigated and any violations corrected.

A good portion of this investigation involved trying to find out who done it—not who had displayed or condoned jobsite porn, but who had had the audacity to contact Hard Hatted Women.

Nevertheless, changes were made: in response to a memo from the main office, supervisors met with all employees and mandated immediate removal of all materials of a pornographic nature, with the exception of calendars kept in lockers.



Steward's Corner — July 1985

Self-Defense Workshops Bring Women Into the Union

by Priscilla Golding

Since 1983 self-defense training has been available to women members of Service Employees Local 509. The training is an ongoing program of the Local 509 Women's Committee, and the workshops are our most well-attended events.

SEIU 509 is a Massachusetts-wide local representing human service workers from ten state agencies. The majority of our members are women.

Because of the nature of our jobs, our members are often in physically dangerous situations. We visit clients in their homes; we interview people who are angry at the system we represent; and we often are the bearers of bad news about benefits or child custody.

The Women's Committee has a commitment to providing services to members as well as to making the union accessible to women outside the hierarchy. Two goals can be reached by offering self-defense workshops. The first is to improve women's physical self-confidence—helping our members to reclaim their strength through instruction and emotional support. The second is to bring the union to the worksites. Many of our members have very little if any contact with union officials.

Structure

The structure of the self-defense workshops evolved from programs developed by the Boston Area Self-Defense Collective. The collective has been studying martial arts and self-defense for ten years.

Publicity for the workshops is done through the union newspaper and through announcements at meetings. A coupon is printed in the paper which can be clipped and returned to the Women's Committee.

[Mary Baird is the editor of *Riveting News*, the bimonthly newsletter of Hard Hatted Women. Write to Hard Hatted Women, P.O. Box 93384, Cleveland, OH 44101, for a copy of their advocacy letter or *Riveting News*. To contact Women in Fire Suppression, write: 411 Marathon Ave., Dayton, OH 45406.]

The member is then contacted and asked to arrange space for the workshop and to sign up women at her office. The workshops are held directly after work at the worksite; childcare is made available if necessary.

Each workshop is self-contained. It does not need to be followed up by classes, although ongoing study is always suggested. Women can learn useful skills in a two-hour session.

The women talk about their attitudes toward self-defense prior to the physical instruction, as well as afterwards. Admitting to our fears is the first step in accepting our right to defend ourselves. The physical instruction focuses on the power and strength already possessed by women but hidden under layers of tradition. Frequently women are amazed at their ability to punch and to strike a target once the fist is made and the foot is cocked.

Returning Power

Response to our workshops continues to be very positive. Often it is the first time that the sisters attending have identified as Local 509 members.

A union should be a structure which returns power to its members. Self-defense is a concrete realization of that goal. The challenge for us is to link the empowerment of self-defense with the collective empowerment of unionism.

[At the time this article appeared in *Labor Notes* Priscilla Golding was co-chair of the SEIU Local 509 Women's Committee and a member of the Boston Area Self-Defense Collective. She is now executive director of Women in the Building Trades. The article was written with assistance from Jill Coleman and Jane Waldfoegel.]

16. Organizing Against Racism

Racism affects workers in their communities, their workplaces, and their unions. Black, white, Arab, Asian, Native American and Latino workers all have an interest in overcoming racism, not only because it is morally repugnant in itself, but also in order to build unions and social movements which are unified and therefore better able to carry on the fight for justice. In this chapter we will look at ways that workers in various unions have fought racism.

See also the chapters on Organizing the Unorganized, the Nonunion Workplace, and Immigrant Workers.

Racism at Work—Grieve It!

What should you do if you face racial discrimination at work? The first thing, says long-time activist Jodie Clark, is to exercise your rights under the union contract. Clark is a material handler at the GM plant in Wentzville, Missouri and a member of UAW Local 2250 and the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists. Over the years he has been involved in several struggles over racism at work.

"I would advise people to definitely get the union involved," says Clark. "That's the first step: to file a grievance."

Clark emphasizes that even if you don't think the union structure will take the grievance seriously, you need to take that step in case you later go to court about the problem. "I've been in the court to witness how the union would handle a case like that; they've got a habit of saying, 'We weren't aware of that.' But once you file a grievance, it's on record."

"I filed a number of grievances for racism. For example, I was being harassed on a particular job that was overloaded. And at the same time that I was being harassed and penalized, a white employee who also had a work overload was being afforded help. I didn't

refuse to do the job, but, due to the work overload, I was unable to do it to their satisfaction." So GM disciplined him—a week off. Clark filed a grievance.

"The union knew they had to file a grievance," says Clark, "but I didn't feel that I was getting the proper representation. So I ended up going to the EEOC [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission—look under U.S. Government in the phone book]. I really didn't expect much there. The EEOC didn't have very much teeth in it to start with, and under the Reagan administration it had even less. But one advantage of going to the EEOC, or going outside, is that it puts the company on notice that you don't intend to sit still. That was my purpose for going. I've been there several times."

"The union still just lollygagged around, but the company backed off, as it will in most cases. Eventually my record was cleared and I was paid for the time that I lost."

When he faces a discrimination problem at work, Clark says he sometimes goes to the local chapter of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists to discuss it. "Because there you've got workers from unions throughout the area and you get different ideas and different opinions from others. So it's always good to raise something there."

If the discrimination affects many workers or is not covered by the contract or labor law, then, says Clark, he would consider going to a civil rights organization for help, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) or the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).

Stopping Racist Incidents

Sometimes racism can be faced down when one worker sets the example and takes a stand against it. Naomi Allen, a car inspector for the New York Transit

Authority, tells of one example.

Workers in the car maintenance shops had previously been mostly white men, Allen says. But now, "the composition of the workforce is changing dramatically. There's already been a tremendous turnover of workers, with the older, mostly white workers going out and being replaced by much younger, mostly non-white workers." The new immigrants come from the Soviet Union, India, and the Caribbean. Recently there have been some racist incidents.

"We had a racist leaflet that was circulated through the supervision mail boxes," she recalls. "Somebody put a copy in every mailbox, and when it became known everybody was upset, but nobody did anything about it."

"I drew up a petition calling on the union and the Transit Authority to hold an investigation and find out who was responsible, and to repudiate all racist propaganda. This is important in the climate that we have in New York City, where nothing is a joke, and everything leads to violence immediately. I got hundreds of signatures."

"The only one who responded was the Transit Authority; they sent out a memo saying they would not tolerate any kind of racist actions or words. It wasn't immediate but it was within a month."

"That petition changed the atmosphere. The atmosphere when the thing first came out, the white guys sat around and said, 'Oh, this isn't so bad, everyone knows it's a joke.' But afterwards, whoever did it was completely repudiated, I mean isolated psychologically and politically. Everyone got the idea that if you do jump into action and publicize things and don't let them happen in secret, that you can make a difference."

Fighting Language Discrimination in the Union

At Excel Corp.'s beef processing plant in Fort Morgan, Colorado, Spanish-speaking workers have encountered blatant prejudice both from the company and from their union, Teamster Local 961. A group of workers has been fighting to get the local to recognize their problems, including communicating with them in Spanish. Almost half the local's 2,500 members work for Excel and, according to Linda Mendez, 80-90 percent are Spanish-speaking and three-quarters do not speak English. Mendez is now fired from the plant and is a member of Teamsters for a Democratic Union. "My whole family is in the packing plant," says Mendez. "My mother, my sister got hurt there, my husband, my brother-in-laws, two brothers in another plant in the same company."

"We've had lots of problems with human rights violations. Some people were having kidney problems because management wouldn't let them go to the bathroom. You have supervisors walking the line like prison guards. If they see people talking together they will take the guy away. Some lines that should have 20

people, they have 12. The night shift has five Anglos on a job that three Latinos do during the day."

"When people would go to the business agent, Joe Martin, he'd say, 'I can't understand you. When you know English come back and tell me your problems.'"

"We thought the union hall needed to know, because supposedly there weren't any problems out here at Excel. Joe Martin's idea is that because there are no grievances, they're happy with the union, they're happy with the company, everything is peaches and cream."

"We're two hours away from the union hall in Denver, and nobody would go to the meetings because they couldn't understand. If you did go to union meetings, they're 20 minutes long and they talk about the Broncos."

"So we got 18 people together and traveled two hours to Denver; we met at 6 a.m. I was going as interpreter, I am a withdrawn Teamster. People were treated horribly. They were told to go back to Mexico. And half these people spoke English. They refused me entrance, they locked the door. They said they would not allow interpreters, they had never had any and they weren't going to start now. If you want to understand what's going on, learn English. They were pushed off to one corner; when they made motions they were ignored."

"Meanwhile, we had a petition to replace Joe Martin with a bilingual BA. We got close to 400 signatures on it. It was hard to do—my mother was taken to the office and they told her they didn't want her running a petition in the plant. So she told them what they were doing was against the law. I copied the pages from TDU's legal rights handbook and had a lawyer write up a letter for us, that we had the right to do this. She brought that in and they called the head office (it's a subsidiary of Cargill), and then they said they were sorry."

"We had 500 flyers made up about the general meeting and the petition. My sister put them on the cars in the parking lot, both shifts. Joe Martin came and pulled one off and threw it on the floor. We went to the NLRB and the company agreed to let flyers be put up inside the plant and not be torn down."

"A month later we went to the union meeting with 25 people. We won three motions; one of them was to get our petition accepted. But we still didn't get the interpreter. One guy stood up and talked for 20 minutes in Spanish. The president said, 'I don't understand you.' My mother got up and said, 'That's exactly how he feels when you're talking.'"

"A few months later we finally did get a bilingual business agent out here. He's Joe's assistant and he's no better than Joe. He's completely for the company. But now there's no way they can say there's no problems out here because he knows there's problems out here. And he is roaming the plant, he's not sitting in the lunchroom. Even Joe used to leave at 1:00 but now he stays till 4."

"We have a long way to go but we've made such strides in the last year and I owe it all to TDU. Our

local elections aren't for months, but already the incumbents have come down looking for Excel people to run on their slates. Where before we were totally ignored. And we'll have our own slate too which is basically people from Excel."

Dealing with Racial Antagonism Among Union Members

Ora Malone spent 19 years as a shop steward in a garment factory and later became an International representative for ACTWU. As an International rep Malone found that she sometimes had to deal with different racial groups fighting each other.

"The biggest blowout I ever had," says Malone, "was at one factory where they were into it about the radio. It was a white and Black thing, and the whites were saying the Blacks were playing the radio too loud. When I had to deal with these situations I would say, 'Look, management don't like you because you're white. He tries to divide and conquer. He has no more care for you because you're white, you are just a time card and a number. If you're white or Black, you have to learn to work together and talk to one another.

"If the radio is too loud, there's no need of calling management, and telling the manager to make somebody turn the radio off. These are your sisters and brothers in the union. From now on, would you promise me that you won't ever let this come up again, something that you can do yourself. You go up and tell them to turn the radio down. And if the fan is too cold, if you're Black and you're too cold, you go back and tell them, it's too cool in here for me. But do not run to management on another union member.' That's how I dealt with the issue and it worked very well."

Dealing With Differences Among Asian and Black Workers

"Another problem that I had in this shop," says Malone, "began when the Asians started coming in. The Blacks, some of them, started saying to Asians the same things that I had been told when I went into the shop, 'You ought to go back where you came from.' When they used to say that to me, I said I had no idea where I came from. And now I had to convince the Blacks that they didn't belong here either. All of us were immigrants, and none of us were supposed to be here, but since they killed off all the Indians, there weren't enough people to run the economy, so we'd just have to work it out together."

Just having the workers sit down and talk to each other, Malone says, went a long way toward solving the problems. "I would call them in a room together, and I would talk to them. Most of the time I had to have an interpreter, though some of them spoke beautiful English.

"The main thing is to get workers to stop running to management on one another, to talk it out

among yourselves. It's better to each yell at one another, than to have management yelling at you, because he can fire you."

Forming a Caucus

The forms of organization that minority workers have developed to deal with racism have changed and evolved over the years. In the 1960s and 1970s Black and Latino workers often organized caucuses within their unions to fight discrimination both in the workplace and in the union itself. These caucuses won important gains.

Lew Moye, now a co-chair of the New Directions Movement in the United Auto Workers, was involved in a Black caucus at Chrysler in St. Louis that won important civil rights victories in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

"In the early years," says Moye, "the Black caucus organized around racism and discrimination as practiced by the corporation. That was in 1969. Blacks were denied opportunities to work in certain departments and denied certain jobs. They were not being hired proportionally, and women also were being discriminated against.

"There was also discrimination within the union, that was taken up as well. There were not many Blacks in leadership within the union, in the local or in the region. At the time there were only a few women in the plant. Chrysler hadn't hired any women in production since 1954, Black or white.

"So we organized initially around discrimination towards Black employees, and we set up a structure and named ourselves. We collected information of discrimination and filed a class action complaint against Chrysler. That complaint worked its way through the EEOC system up to the President's Civil Rights Commission.

"That Commission came to St. Louis in 1970 and heard the case, and the case received national attention. As a result, the plant manager was removed and the personnel manager was removed. In both the complaints that we filed, they were found guilty and they were ordered to set up affirmative action and to make corrections.

"So Blacks were able to transfer into various departments that they had been denied: skilled trades and also certain technical areas, secretary and clerk. And also as a result, Chrysler started to hire women in production in 1970.

"During the complaint, we charged the union with collusion in the discrimination. In other words, where Blacks were being denied the right to work in skilled trades, the union was not taking up that fight. Or if Blacks were being unjustly disciplined, we said that the union was not taking up those battles.

"So as a result of that the International union sent representatives in from Detroit to meet with our caucus, and discussed the racial problem within the union, and several Blacks were given some regional positions and eventually became International repre-

sentatives. We have seen a progression to the point where one of the two Chrysler plants is currently represented by a Black president."

The victories of Black caucuses and the civil rights movement in general had an important impact on the subsequent activities of Black unionists. "Since then," says Moye, "any activity, any caucus that I've worked in has included broad sections of the plant, Black, white and women, and always been based on the principle of Black and white unity, men and women."

Black Caucus Allies with Community Organization

At another St. Louis auto plant, this one owned by General Motors, a Black caucus allied with a community group to win victories against racial discrimination by both GM and the UAW. This was in the early 1980s, at a time when both the labor movement and the civil rights movement were on the defensive. The Concerned Auto Workers (CAW) and the Organization of Black Struggle (OBS), a grassroots community organization, worked together on a variety of issues from shop floor grievances to important labor civil rights cases. One of the founders of CAW and OBS was Richard Dockett, who has spent 26 years in the auto industry.

One of the principles of these groups, says Dockett, is that what benefits Black and women workers will benefit all workers. "Sometimes it's thought that when Black caucuses are formed, or when people fight racism or fight sexism, that this is not something that benefits the workforce in general," says Dockett. "But in fact, in a deep sense it does, because it strengthens the workforce overall, and raises it to the point where workers can resist the onslaught of management."

The Organization of Black Struggle had been started in the 1970s by Alphonso Lumpkin, Nathaniel Mosely, Richard Dockett—all UAW members—and other activists. Some of the members of OBS worked in the GM complex in St. Louis. At that time there were four plants employing 10,000 workers, of whom about 2,500 were Black and women workers, relatively new to the workforce.

Black workers felt that GM still discriminated in hiring, job placement and respectful treatment. And they felt that UAW Local 25 was not giving them fair representation. So they formed the Concerned Auto Workers caucus, bringing together workers from all four plants in the complex.

"Let me give you a for instance," says Dockett. "There was a superintendent that kicked a Black woman in the behind. She wrote grievances and she brought it to our attention. By that time we were well-organized, to the point where we could get some recognition from the shop chairman. The union knew they would have to tell the superintendent that adjustments had to be made, that they couldn't just ignore it. And let's not make it the run of the mill settlement.

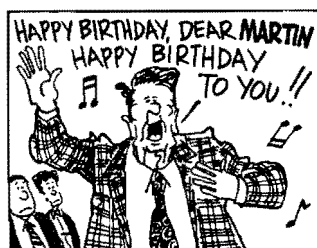
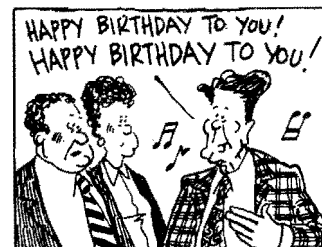
"Before we were organized in the caucus, Black workers got very few material money gains from the union. But after we got organized, they really started getting some money settlements. We had an impact on the vast majority of the Black workers there and the white workers as well, and we had good support from white workers and women workers.

No Work on King's Birthday

"Another joint project we worked at in the 1970s, and all the way up into the 1980s, was King's birthday. Black workers mainly, but workers in general, abstained from working on King's birthday. As a result of that the plant couldn't run, or ran short hours, for a decade. That was before it was made a holiday, our group was part of the reason that it was. We would come in and tell the foreman the next day, 'It was King's birthday, we don't work on that day.'

"It's kind of funny in a way—when we first started not going to work on King's birthday, we did it because we thought Detroit was doing it. And come to find out, Detroit was working and we weren't. Hell, we got that whole monster shut down over there, and we were across the street eating soul food. We thought we were taking the lead from them, and we didn't find out till years passed that it wasn't as widespread as we thought it was."

In the late 1970s, the CAW and the OBS decided to challenge what they saw as the complicity between GM and the UAW in denying Black workers decent jobs. "At the time," says Dockett, "Blacks were relegated to the heaviest, the dirtiest, and the grimmest jobs.



"At the time we had to exhaust all the avenues—through the union, through the company, through the state, through the EEOC." Throughout this period of a few years, the CAW organized demonstrations in front of the plant, and sometimes those protests led workers to refuse to go to work. These demonstrations, says Dockett, were supported by both Black and white workers. When the company fired several of the Black workers, they won their jobs back when union and company films proved that the firings were discriminatory because both whites and Blacks had been

involved, but only Blacks had been fired.

"The judge pointed out that they had had other strikes," Dockett observes, "and they were for economic reasons. Ours was for human rights, and they couldn't show where they took a similar action against those other workers."

Having exhausted all internal remedies, the workers took the discrimination case to federal court. "We packed the courtroom on most days that the trials took place," Dockett remembers, "and we had workers there from the plant and other community people." This not only provided political support for the case, but was also an educational experience for those who attended. "A lot of them didn't know the mechanics of how the union and the company function, and we were able to show them very graphically how they worked. Both General Motors and the union, they flew attorneys in by the airplane loads, they had lawyers coming in with other lawyers carrying the briefs for the main lawyers." Workers testified about GM's discrimination and the complicity of the union.

The combination of lawsuits and worker and community support succeeded, and the court forced the company and the union to rectify their discriminatory practices.

Blacks Enforce Seniority

However, about two years later there was another problem. GM decided to close the old plant, and the issue became who would get called to work in other plants, particularly in the new Wentzville plant nearby. "They said the first 107 people would be selected based on 'special skills,'" Dockett remembers. "Now our caucus was kicking strong; we wanted to know what 'special skills' were, because we surmised that it was going to be white workers for the most part. Because as auto workers there's no such thing. There are no 'special skills.' And the vast majority that they picked were white workers."

"Now the vast majority of them that were eligible to go to Wentzville were Black workers. So if you just pulled them from the hat, you still would get a majority Black workers. And there was nothing to show that the ones that they picked had any greater skills than the ones they didn't."

"Walter Williams, the UAW regional director, told us that not only would they be permitted to pick those 107 workers based on special skills, but they wouldn't have to call people in line of seniority until production started. That could have been a year or two, however long it took. We weren't for it, not only from the racial standpoint, but it weakened us as a group of workers, it pitted us against one another. There was enough pitting as it was. And you've got people without benefits, polishing up their apples."

"We protested that to the union and the company. We made the union primary, because they were in complicity with the company, they should never have agreed with the company to give up our seniority rights."

"We formed a caravan down at Local 25 and

went out there to the UAW regional office in St. Louis and shut it down. We had a demonstration out there that was several hundred, with a mass protest and a picket. We were calling for seniority rights to be enforced. It put the union in an awkward position, because when we first went to work in there, they were telling us the reason we didn't have the better jobs was because we didn't have the seniority." Representatives of the OBS also came to the demonstration.

"We let the media know we were coming," says Dockett. "It so happened it was a real good day, because the World Series was on and all these auto workers from throughout St. Louis, throughout the country, throughout the world, got our message."

"Before I could get back home, the phone was ringing. The UAW wanted to meet with us and they started calling workers in line by seniority. So we won that one. And you know who the majority of workers were that went out there to the new plant. Black. They knew that. So we flexed our muscles somewhat."

Minority Caucuses Today

There are not nearly as many minority caucuses in unions today as there were twenty or even ten years ago. There are several reasons for this: 1) The drastic decline of the civil rights movements in general has meant less of an "organizing atmosphere" in the workplace as well. 2) In some industries, the massive layoffs of the 1980's meant demoralization as minority workers saw job opportunities disappear. 3) In some unions, African-American and Latino members were able to enter the political mainstream, win office, and take over leadership of local unions themselves. In many unions Blacks and Latinos were appointed to union staffs as well.

Bill Fletcher, a long-time activist, notes that in Boston a group formed in 1981 called "Union Members for Jobs and Equality," made up mostly of Black and Latino workers in the public employee unions. Its purpose was to fight "Proposition 2½," a tax proposal which would have led to large layoffs of public employees. "Basically it was raising the issue of affirmative action and the disastrous impact the layoffs were having on workers of color," says Fletcher.

Once the Proposition passed and the layoffs took place, "The group became a mechanism to encourage and train workers of color to run for union office. We were successful at that, and partly as a result of being successful, the group fell apart, because people became very invested in their new responsibilities in the union and just simply didn't have the time."

The decline of minority caucuses does not mean that they are not still a good idea in many workplaces. One group which exists today is at United Parcel Service in Kansas City, the Concerned Minorities caucus founded in October 1986. One of its leaders, Michael Savvoir, is also a leader of Teamsters for a Democratic Union. He worked as a young man with a Kansas City civil rights group called Freedom, Incorporated and later in college with the Congress of

Racial Equality (CORE).

"There is a subtle racism in Kansas City," says Savvoir. "The atmosphere tends to relegate Blacks to the worst jobs." Concerned Minorities is made up of Black, Latino and Native American UPS workers.

"We've been active in the area of Black female rights and Black career opportunities in the workplace," says Savvoir. "We've taken up sexual harassment cases. We've been very active in the routine promotional aspects of the job and terminations. And

we've had the opportunity to lend our services to other unions, such as the Kansas Turnpike Authority Employees."

One of the central activities of the group has been to pressure UPS to hire more Black women workers. "They say they can't find any qualified Black females, so the workplace is relegated to just one Black



Michael Savvoir.

female in each capacity. And blatantly that's a statement of discrimination."

Concerned Minorities has protested to the company or the union, or has helped workers sue in court for their rights. "Neither the company nor the union have really been willing to acknowledge us," says Savvoir. "Of course, they've had to, but they haven't willingly done so."

And white workers have been suspicious of the group. But, says Savvoir, "While some of our non-minority employees may have felt it threatening to them, I think our organization has really brought about a better environment for everyone. It's just a little cog in the network that can hopefully return some control of the workplace at large to the rank and file."

A Multiracial Caucus To Fight Racism

In AFSCME Local 1489 in Boston, it was a multiracial caucus which fought against discrimination. Meizhu Lui, a kitchen worker at Boston City Hospital and now the president of the local, describes how she and some of her co-workers organized.

"When I started working here ten years ago all the officers were white males. I'm not so sure that was because they were consciously trying to keep out

women or people of color. It was more just people's image of what a union leader is. Some of them had relatives higher up in the union."

Lui and other workers organized a reform caucus. "It wasn't a specific fight against racism," Lui says, "but the group did do things like raise the issue of translation of the newsletter. There was a big struggle as to whether people who don't speak English as a native language should learn English, or whether it's the responsibility of the union to keep everybody informed."

"And another big fight was around affirmative action. However, I have to say that it wasn't that all the Blacks agreed with affirmative action and all the whites disagreed; there was some of each on both sides. But it was good that it was discussed publicly."

The reform caucus, says Lui, "was mixed. In fact, the first president of the progressive caucus was a white male from South Boston, but a Black woman was elected secretary at the same time." Later Meizhu Lui became president of the local.

Once in office, the new leadership took on some of the discrimination issues which had been neglected.

"I've had a number of run-ins with EMTs, the ambulance drivers who at one time were part of our local," says Lui. "That workforce was mostly white

men and mostly from one part of the city, and some of the things they were doing were pretty outrageous. It would take them a lot longer to answer emergency calls in Black neighborhoods, and their excuse was that they would have to wait for police escort to go in there because it was dangerous for them. We felt that that really wasn't true. It was more their attitude. If you go

in with a flashlight swinging like a billy club, as opposed to a stethoscope around your neck, people have a different attitude about it."

In order to deal with this issue, "We joined the affirmative action committee of the hospital. It's a board of trustees committee, but a number of people joined it and pushed the issue. At the same time, the mayor's human rights commission did an investigation that validated a lot of the rumors about racism in that area."

"Racism is sometimes on the part of other union members, and you have to keep your own house in



Meizhu Lui (left) and a community resident at a rally for Boston City Hospital.

order if you're going to deal with anything else. For example, one of the security guards attacked a Black housekeeper, and one of the ways we dealt with it was to publicize it in the union newspaper. We took a stand that the security guard should be tried. There was a whole disciplinary process in the union, including a trial by the executive board. And the progressives didn't win that one." The security guard was not punished. Nevertheless, says Lui, "It makes the point that other people are noticing and don't think it's a good thing."

Another way that unions must deal with the race question, says Lui, is simply by responding to initiatives that come from different groups. "We've had for years a reasonably large Puerto Rican population in the membership. One of the first steps of getting them more involved was doing some translation, but being involved in the union still wasn't comfortable to them, so people weren't coming to meetings. Plus, there was a Puerto Rican on the Board of Trustees who was very anti-union and he was the one who had gotten them the jobs in the first place.

"One of the things that broke the ice was that some of them decided they wanted a softball team, and they approached the local to be a sponsor. We did, and that went a long way. We ended up buying their uniforms. So here they were in a Puerto Rican softball league out on the field with these AFSCME Local 1489 shirts, and it was very good in promoting the union in the community in an informal kind of way. It gave them some pride in the union, and they really liked having us go to the games. So sometimes things you can do are not strictly union, but just showing support for ideas and initiatives that people have."

Getting White Workers Involved

The fight against racism is not solely the responsibility of minority workers. If the union cause is going to be advanced, then white workers must also play a central role in fighting racism. Jeff Perry, Treasurer of Local 300 of the National Postal Mail Handlers Union, tells how a multiracial caucus at his workplace took the question of racism seriously, made it a touchstone of their work, and was elected to union office. The group fought racism on the shop floor and challenged a racist all-white organization that was allied with management.

"There are about 1,300 mailhandlers at the Bulk Mail Center in northern New Jersey and about 4,000 workers there total," says Perry. "Our facility is about one-third Black and Hispanic and two-thirds white, and the female percentage is about 20 percent."

Perry, who is white, began working at the center in 1974. He talks first about challenging the daily racism he encountered on the shop floor.

"My own experience working on the floor was that if you work eight hours in the night with a white worker, in the course of that time a race question would come up. Some little comment here, you're talking about sports or something else. Some little prob-

ing to get the affirmation, 'Yeah, we're both white.' And if you don't go with it, it changes things. I'm talking about jumping up and saying, 'Wait a minute, that's not right!' and challenging it. If it goes unchallenged, the group tends to be monolithic in its understanding. But if it is challenged, the thing can fracture a little bit, and the racism doesn't have such a pervasive hold.

"Or merely sitting at an all-white table in the lunchroom. What kind of message is that sending to other people about how welcome they are?

"Some people argue that you really don't want to bring up this race question too much because you're going to alienate some white workers. They don't want to talk about it, you're going to turn them off. But what we learned from our experience has been the exact opposite—that by exposing racist practices and ideas, and calling upon people to oppose them, we've gotten stronger, not weaker."

The group, made up of both Black and white workers, was putting out a regular newsletter, "on payday," says Perry, "because that's when we had the most people there." The newsletter took an editorial stand against racism. "Every issue of our paper we looked at issues not only from the perspective of how our workers were being affected, but we would also ask, Was there a racist edge to it? Was there a sexist edge?

"For example, we had a thing called 'light duty assignments.' In the Postal Service, if you are injured off the job, there is a contract provision where they're supposed to find you work.

"But we found that a lot of people were being denied light duty assignments, and the people who were being denied were essentially Blacks and Hispanics and women—particularly pregnant women. And we wound up waging a major struggle over that, several hundred people outside a Congressman's office, and we got that overturned overnight.

"When I got elected to union office in 1984, one of the first issues we were faced with was 'temporary details.' Ordinarily, a worker gets a bid assignment through seniority, but there is a provision where you can change your schedule, and get a 'detail'—if there was someone sick in your house, for instance.

"There's very good reasons why this might happen for a short period of time, but if it happens for a long time it tends to violate the seniority rights of others. If you're a junior employee and all of a sudden you're getting weekends off and people with ten and fifteen years can't get that, you're violating their rights.

"When I came into office I found 20, 30, 40 cases of people who had these details, some without even the paperwork that is supposed to accompany them, and some for years. And virtually everyone who had these long-term details was white.

"We took the position that this had to be challenged, on the basis of it being a racist and discriminatory practice and not in the interest of our group as a whole, our mailhandlers who had seniority rights in the contract."



Bill Burke/Impact Visuals

Mine workers show their support for civil rights during the NAACP Silent March on Washington. The miners took time off from the Pittston picket lines in southwest Virginia to journey to the August 26, 1989 march.

The reformers in Local 300 also used the steward system to insure that all workers got fair representation.

"When we came into office, we didn't yet have the practice of election of shop stewards," Perry says. "It wasn't in our constitution. What we did, though, we started a practice where, rather than just appointing people, we'd have group discussions and get input from people on the floor. We tried to consciously look at the racial make-up of our steward apparatus. We tried to make sure that the percentage of Black workers was reflective of how key our Black membership was to the struggle we were waging. And of our five chief stewards, four were Black."

A Racist Organization Behind the Discrimination

As it turned out, racist patterns in the assignment of temporary details and light duty were no accident.

"I had been a night worker and far removed from the labor-management meetings between our union and the Postal Service people," Perry remembers. "We had been divorced from the union leadership and never kept informed. But after being elected to office, I and some of the chief stewards and

stewards went to one of these labor-management meetings.

"My jaw dropped, because I found the management running our facility were seven white Italian males. That was not reflective of the ethnic or sexual make-up of the community in which I live or the place I work.

"So we did a little digging and we quickly found that all seven of them were members of a thing called the Columbia Association. Their constitution said it was for Italian-Americans only. High-level officials in the other major facilities in north Jersey and New York were in it too—and so were high-level union people from the Mail Handlers and reportedly from the other two postal unions. The former head of the Mail Handlers at our facility was also the former president of the Columbia Association, and its address was our postal facility."

As Jeff Perry makes clear, this was not an innocent social club, but a labor-management clique which was giving special privileges to some white workers.

"We quickly seized on the existence of the Columbia Association, its ties between union and management, as a racist and segregatory organization.

We just hit that theme repeatedly, not only in our newsletter, but we took it to the local newspapers and other media." The group also filed an Equal Employment Opportunity case with the federal government.

"When we would sit down with management, and they wanted to lecture us about management's rights," says Perry, "we took the position they couldn't teach us anything about anything as long as they were allowing this racist segregatory organization to exist. We had one string on our guitar. They didn't utter a peep as we started blasting and blasting, and we really backed them into a wall.

"Here was this all-white Italian male group denying light duty to pregnant women! We had apple pie and motherhood on our side on this one. And we just blasted them and we made them look like the horrible ogres that they were, because they were denying pregnant women a fair chance. And the majority of the pregnant women were Black or Hispanic or Asian.

"At first a lot of people thought it was very bold, because everyone thought they were so powerful. But by assuming the moral upper hand in this we really isolated them, and effectively limited their power to struggle against us."

The Columbia Association didn't disappear when challenged by the reformers. They counterattacked, arguing that the reformers were anti-white racists.

Perry believes that at this point it was very important that there were some white workers involved in opposing the discrimination against Blacks. "The fact that we had some whites who actively spoke against racism on the work floor was crucial to winning and neutralizing whites who had opposed the unity we were trying to build. That was part of the task we had to accomplish: to get whites not to look the other way when there are instances of racism."

How would Perry talk to an Italian-American worker about why he should oppose the Columbia Association clique and support the reformers?

"If they're denying light duty to a Black pregnant woman," says Perry, "we just talk about it. The issues we're talking about are basic human issues, basic workers' issues. Workers know that people shouldn't be denied light duty, not in our post office anyway.

"If we can win people to be incensed at injustice—and racism and sexism are the real live ones we face very day—they're going to be more class conscious too. They'll be able to see the importance of solidarity and other struggles.

"People have to make some sacrifices sometimes in struggles. Like when you go on the picket line, when you strike, you're giving up that dollars and cents. Your appeal cannot be simply dollars and cents, not if you're trying to build unity. Our struggle was never solely about economics."

Teachers Confront Racism in Schools

Our next two stories deal with teachers and students. Just as for other workers, teachers' working conditions are directly affected by racism, because racist

schools become difficult, unpleasant and dangerous places to work. Michael Charney, an executive board member of AFT Local 279 in Cleveland, says, "If there's a lot of racial tension, and if the kids feel alienated from one another, it's going to be real hard to teach.

"Unions haven't pushed far enough on getting the kind of emotional satisfaction a teacher needs, which is really the fundamental reason most teachers enter teaching. Teachers want to educate kids. And most unions only deal with salaries and those types of things and not with the satisfaction that you get when kids actually learn. Kids aren't going to learn in an atmosphere of racism."

Bob Peterson, an executive board member of the Milwaukee Teachers Education Association, an independent union, says, "A growing number of the children that we're ostensibly serving are children of color, and teachers have a responsibility to address the question of race." In Milwaukee, 70 percent of the students are Black or Hispanic, but only 20 percent of the teachers are.

"We should stop miseducating children of color," says Peterson. "Historically this has been done through a variety of segregation tracking: low resources, low expectations, just blatant racism. In order to do a good job of teaching, one not only has to have an anti-racist attitude, but one also has to be involved in broader school issues on the city, state, and national level, in politics and legislation, and in union politics in order to address the very issues which are causing the miseducation in the first place.

"Our society should have a social policy within the schools that is anti-racist, and children should learn that racism is scientifically incorrect, morally and socially corrupt.

"It's so important in the education industry, because the unions are so overwhelmingly white, the teaching force is so overwhelmingly white, and we're dealing with children in urban areas that are predominantly minority. I mean talk about teacher empowerment when 80 percent of the teachers are white and 70 percent of the kids are Black? What are you saying, that these white teachers should have more and more power over children of color?"

Milwaukee Teachers Honor Martin Luther King

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Bill Burke/Impact Visuals

Mine workers show their support for civil rights during the NAACP Silent March on Washington. The miners took time off from the Pittston picket lines in southwest Virginia to journey to the August 26, 1989 march.

The reformers in Local 300 also used the steward system to insure that all workers got fair representation.

"When we came into office, we didn't yet have the practice of election of shop stewards," Perry says. "It wasn't in our constitution. What we did, though, we started a practice where, rather than just appointing people, we'd have group discussions and get input from people on the floor. We tried to consciously look at the racial make-up of our steward apparatus. We tried to make sure that the percentage of Black workers was reflective of how key our Black membership was to the struggle we were waging. And of our five chief stewards, four were Black."

A Racist Organization Behind the Discrimination

As it turned out, racist patterns in the assignment of temporary details and light duty were no accident.

"I had been a night worker and far removed from the labor-management meetings between our union and the Postal Service people," Perry remembers. "We had been divorced from the union leadership and never kept informed. But after being elected to office, I and some of the chief stewards and

stewards went to one of these labor-management meetings.

"My jaw dropped, because I found the management running our facility were seven white Italian males. That was not reflective of the ethnic or sexual make-up of the community in which I live or the place I work.

"So we did a little digging and we quickly found that all seven of them were members of a thing called the Columbia Association. Their constitution said it was for Italian-Americans only. High-level officials in the other major facilities in north Jersey and New York were in it too—and so were high-level union people from the Mail Handlers and reportedly from the other two postal unions. The former head of the Mail Handlers at our facility was also the former president of the Columbia Association, and its address was our postal facility."

As Jeff Perry makes clear, this was not an innocent social club, but a labor-management clique which was giving special privileges to some white workers.

"We quickly seized on the existence of the Columbia Association, its ties between union and management, as a racist and segregatory organization.

We just hit that theme repeatedly, not only in our newsletter, but we took it to the local newspapers and other media." The group also filed an Equal Employment Opportunity case with the federal government.

"When we would sit down with management, and they wanted to lecture us about management's rights," says Perry, "we took the position they couldn't teach us anything about anything as long as they were allowing this racist segregatory organization to exist. We had one string on our guitar. They didn't utter a peep as we started blasting and blasting, and we really backed them into a wall.

"Here was this all-white Italian male group denying light duty to pregnant women! We had apple pie and motherhood on our side on this one. And we just blasted them and we made them look like the horrible ogres that they were, because they were denying pregnant women a fair chance. And the majority of the pregnant women were Black or Hispanic or Asian.

"At first a lot of people thought it was very bold, because everyone thought they were so powerful. But by assuming the moral upper hand in this we really isolated them, and effectively limited their power to struggle against us."

The Columbia Association didn't disappear when challenged by the reformers. They counterattacked, arguing that the reformers were anti-white racists.

Perry believes that at this point it was very important that there were some white workers involved in opposing the discrimination against Blacks. "The fact that we had some whites who actively spoke against racism on the work floor was crucial to winning and neutralizing whites who had opposed the unity we were trying to build. That was part of the task we had to accomplish: to get whites not to look the other way when there are instances of racism."

How would Perry talk to an Italian-American worker about why he should oppose the Columbia Association clique and support the reformers?

"If they're denying light duty to a Black pregnant woman," says Perry, "we just talk about it. The issues we're talking about are basic human issues, basic workers' issues. Workers know that people shouldn't be denied light duty, not in our post office anyway.

"If we can win people to be incensed at injustice—and racism and sexism are the real live ones we face very day—they're going to be more class conscious too. They'll be able to see the importance of solidarity and other struggles.

"People have to make some sacrifices sometimes in struggles. Like when you go on the picket line, when you strike, you're giving up that dollars and cents. Your appeal cannot be simply dollars and cents, not if you're trying to build unity. Our struggle was never solely about economics."

Teachers Confront Racism in Schools

Our next two stories deal with teachers and students. Just as for other workers, teachers' working conditions are directly affected by racism, because racist

schools become difficult, unpleasant and dangerous places to work. Michael Charney, an executive board member of AFT Local 279 in Cleveland, says, "If there's a lot of racial tension, and if the kids feel alienated from one another, it's going to be real hard to teach.

"Unions haven't pushed far enough on getting the kind of emotional satisfaction a teacher needs, which is really the fundamental reason most teachers enter teaching. Teachers want to educate kids. And most unions only deal with salaries and those types of things and not with the satisfaction that you get when kids actually learn. Kids aren't going to learn in an atmosphere of racism."

Bob Peterson, an executive board member of the Milwaukee Teachers Education Association, an independent union, says, "A growing number of the children that we're ostensibly serving are children of color, and teachers have a responsibility to address the question of race." In Milwaukee, 70 percent of the students are Black or Hispanic, but only 20 percent of the teachers are.

"We should stop miseducating children of color," says Peterson. "Historically this has been done through a variety of segregation tracking: low resources, low expectations, just blatant racism. In order to do a good job of teaching, one not only has to have an anti-racist attitude, but one also has to be involved in broader school issues on the city, state, and national level, in politics and legislation, and in union politics in order to address the very issues which are causing the miseducation in the first place.

"Our society should have a social policy within the schools that is anti-racist, and children should learn that racism is scientifically incorrect, morally and socially corrupt.

"It's so important in the education industry, because the unions are so overwhelmingly white, the teaching force is so overwhelmingly white, and we're dealing with children in urban areas that are predominantly minority. I mean talk about teacher empowerment when 80 percent of the teachers are white and 70 percent of the kids are Black? What are you saying, that these white teachers should have more and more power over children of color?"

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teachers by the union. In any case, says Peterson, "It left the union very divided." The leadership had ruled that teachers who had scabbed on the strike could not hold a position on any union committee.

At that time Peterson and some like-minded teachers had formed a small caucus called "Educators United" which had published two numbers of a newsletter. Small and new though it was, this caucus wanted to do something to overcome the racial antagonism in the union and in the community.

"We decided to start a writing contest on Martin Luther King," says Peterson. "The purpose was to encourage teachers to teach Black history and to network with progressive whites and Blacks within our union."

"At the same time, we tried to resuscitate the union's Human Relations Minority Educators Committee. In the course of this we brought in some Black teachers who had scabbed on the 1975 strike, and we forced the issue that they should be allowed to be full members, and we won that struggle."

"We tried to get the union to endorse the contest, but they refused that first year because they thought it was too radical. They tried to sabotage it, but we did it anyway and it was very successful. We got a couple of thousand essays, and a couple of hundred teachers participated, and we had a very moving awards ceremony. It was the first thing that we did that brought white and Black teachers together and allowed us to start building a base within the union."

"We maintained a committee that ran the contest for five years, made up mainly of elementary teachers and what I call rank and file librarians in the public library system. And the union participated by having representatives come to the meeting."

"The next year the union grabbed it. This was the feather in their cap. It has been portrayed as their big community involvement by the mass media. By that second year, when it was clear the contest was good, the union then said, Oh, great, let's funnel our support through this Human Relations Minority Educators Committee. And ever since that time that committee has had a life of its own and has sponsored workshops within the union about how to teach about African-American history, and it's a pretty remarkable transformation of that one little segment of the union."

"Now, several years later, various corporations are giving scholarships to this writing contest and the city is coming in with some of their bureaucrats and helping out. It's both positive and negative. After about the third year, we were getting five or six thousand essays that we had to judge and we had to organize a hundred judges. So we decided that we had to get other more mainstream people involved, because we had other tasks to accomplish."

"Some of us decided to launch a much more ambitious project, a newspaper called *Rethinking Schools*. That grew out of an effort, again, to link some community struggles with rank and file union struggles. We were tired of always trooping down to the school board on the defensive, after the fact, when they had come out with a reactionary policy."

"We also had a problem with keeping in contact with the workers at 160 worksites. For instance, running in elections every two years; you have to have contacts at all those schools."

"It's been going now for four years. We publish quarterly. It's a small group of people on the editorial committee, but a very broad group of people who support us through distribution and fundraising and occasionally politically if we do certain things." The group which works on the paper is racially mixed, though most of those involved are white.

About 25 percent of the articles in the paper deal with issues related to race, says Peterson, such as desegregation, which is still a big issue in Milwaukee, and how to teach about Native Americans.

Asked how to begin organizing around race issues with teacher unionists, Peterson says, "Unions often feel that discussion of race is a dividing issue, so they prefer to forget that it exists. If the leadership is hesitant there need to be creative alternatives that people can use." He has several suggestions:

- Investigate at the local university what classes are given that would tend to draw like-minded people.
- Start with a discussion circle about how to teach racial issues and about local problems.
- Work with the union's human rights committee.
- Link up with a community group and form a committee that includes teachers, parents, and community people to address educational issues around race.
- Start a caucus or newsletter.

Cleveland Teachers Organize Student Anti-Racism Groups

Michael Charney, a teacher for 17 years and co-editor of his local union newspaper, has long been involved in anti-racist work.

When in the late 1970s Cleveland began its court-ordered desegregation, the city rapidly became racially polarized, and many feared that violence would break out. Charney got involved in building a grassroots group called "WELCOME" (West Siders and East Siders Let's Come Together).

"Cleveland is divided racially by a river," Charney explains, "and between 1978 and 1980 we developed a series of bridge walks, where Blacks and whites and Puerto Ricans would come together in the middle of a bridge to show that there was an alternative to the segregationist movement. Then we developed a variety of WELCOME wagons that went out to all the communities, and we distributed 5,000 to 10,000 t-shirts with the symbol of Black and white and Hispanic hands, shaking hands under a suspension bridge which was a symbol of Cleveland."

"Once desegregation took place we formed Welcome Clubs at all the high schools and junior highs. There was a teacher advisor whose job it was to put together a group of kids that wanted to change the racial atmosphere in the school: by putting on skits, by dealing with segregation in the cafeteria, whatever. It

was autonomous in each school.

"Then I was able to get a foundation grant for three years in order to do high school organizing. We got kids together every Saturday, it varied between 50 and 100 kids, and we worked on a whole systematic anti-racist program. That included a tabloid newspaper called *Unity Bridge* that the kids produced, that was used as class lessons in about 30 or 40 schools. We picked issues of common concern, anything from the food in the cafeteria to discipline, to get kids to see a common interest, so they wouldn't be as racially divided. We also worked in multi-cultural projects, such as supporting the FLOC boycott [the Farm Labor Organizing Committee is a mostly Latino union], and we did some racial harmony things, like softball leagues.

"So it was an on-going, three-year project in the schools that eventually became much more political. It led to something called the Cleveland Youth Coalition, that fought against and succeeded in stopping a rate increase on the bus fares, that were going to go from 30 cents to 85 cents. We got it down to about 50 cents, through a variety of different activities."

Charney and the other activists in these projects were part of an informal network of forty or fifty teachers. They were able to get some support from the union, though the union did not play a major role.

Asked how teachers can find allies on dealing with racism, Charney says, "It really depends on what you're trying to accomplish. You can't be abstract about racism; you have to say, How does it play out? Then you go approach those constituencies that have some felt needs.

"Dealing with students, one thing would be to reach out to those community people who work with young people and try to create out-of-school projects.

"On South Africa, we organized a youth group around solidarity with the students there, so we dealt with people in the anti-apartheid movement.

"If the issue is racial harmony, I would go to the social workers and the church people who work with youth and arrange different conferences.

"If the issue was racism within the school system, either the curriculum or racist teachers or the administration in a majority-white system, I would deal with the Black parents and the Black civil rights organizations.

"If it's the issue of school board policy, then there's the possibility of developing an electoral coalition around that.

"If you want to do something about standardized testing, then there are certain Black teacher organizations or angry Black parents that want to deal with that."

As the chair of the union's Educational Plan and Policies Committee, Charney is hoping to work more through the union. "We're beginning to explore discussions around curriculum. There's a growing interest around the country in changing the Eurocentric, or white-dominated, type of curriculum in the humanities and social studies and even in math. What's been developed is an alternative called Afro-

centric education, which, for example, roots the history of Afro-Americans in Africa, rather than beginning in slavery. It also tries to change the reading lists so that students don't only read white authors.

"It tries to develop a form of cultural identity among Black youth. So we've brought in different speakers and we held a conference on Malcolm X's birthday around Afrocentric education."

Recently Charney has been working with a Black nationalist organizer active in the community. "He has been coming into my class," Charney explains, "and we've developed a project among the kids called 'The Freedom Fighters.' The focus is on internalized racism, in other words, the way Black students treat one another. He uses the term 'psychological slavery.'

"So the kids are beginning to organize around how they refer to each other with the words 'nigger' and 'bitch' and we're trying to get kids to change their ways of relating to one another. We're saying that what white supremacy has done is strip people of their power and self-worth, and that people have adopted the terms of the oppressor to refer to one another, and that holds people back.

"So the kids have developed rap songs like 'Free the People of Cleveland,' and they go around in classes and do their raps. We've also had a celebration for the release of Nelson Mandela, and we're going to have an 'Understanding Malcolm X Day,' with the kids who normally drop out of school taking the lead."

Cross-Union Organizations

Coalition of Black Trade Unionists

The Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU) grew out of a conference in Chicago in September 1972 called by Black union officials who were disturbed that the AFL-CIO was not endorsing the Democratic Party candidate for President, George McGovern, over Republican Richard Nixon. The founding conference was attended by 1,200 Black union officials from 30 unions.¹

The current CBTU president is AFSCME Secretary-Treasurer William Lucy. The group has local chapters in 27 cities. The CBTU at the national level is primarily concerned with legislative issues. However, the local chapters might be a resource for activists who want guidance in beginning to take on discrimination issues at work.

Black Rank and File Exchange

"The Black Rank and File Exchange was formed in 1984 at a Labor Notes conference," explains the group's national chair, Selwyn Rogers. Rogers is education co-director of UAW Local 262 and belongs to the New Directions Movement within the UAW. "It started off as a discussion at a Black caucus meeting at the conference; we realized that racism was still a major obstacle in our workplaces and even in the union structure. We decided that we as Black activists

needed to stay in contact, and we came up with the idea of a network.

"At the subsequent Labor Notes conference in 1986, we carried that discussion a little further, and realized that we needed to have an organizational structure. Even though we have some Black trade union groups out there, we didn't feel they were addressing our problems to the level that we would like to see them addressed. So we formed the Black Rank and File Exchange."



Selwyn Rogers protests jailing of a South African union leader.

The Exchange has chapters in Detroit, Milwaukee, and Chicago and individual members in other cities. "Our members discuss the problems that we as Black unionists have in the various unions and how we're moving to make them more progressive," Rogers explains. "A lot of people belong to organizations such as New Directions in the UAW, Teamsters for a Democratic Union in the Teamsters, so we bring out some of the activities of those organizations. We ask, Are they addressing Black problems and Black issues too? If they're not, we try to encourage them to deal with more of our problems, as well as the problems of workers in general.

"The major problem is to get accountability of our union leadership. We think a lot of our Black leadership too has drifted away from us, and we need to pull them back in.

"We feel that there's not a proportional Black representation in our various unions. But we also feel that the union leadership generally attracts Black leadership that tends to go along with their mind-set and their way of running the union. So the Black Rank and File Exchange as a national group is really pushing to support reform groups, and to get more Blacks into the hierarchy of our unions that are accountable to us, the Black rank and file."

The Exchange agreed at its 1989 convention to

concentrate on three main issues, Rogers says: "1) business unionism as an issue, and how do we as Blacks look at this business unionism mind-set; 2) the struggle of Black women; and 3) politics going into the 1990s. We feel that we need to set a platform, so we can judge our political candidates both nationally and locally about whether they're addressing our concerns."

Looking back over the last twenty years, Rogers sees continuity in Black unionists' struggle, but also change. "I think there's some differences from groups that were organized back in the early part of the 1970s," he says. "They basically had the approach that we need more Black representation, especially inside the union structure. Today we're taking it where they left off, and we're taking a little bit more sophisticated approach, because we realize that just having Black representation in our unions is not enough. You have to have those Black representatives accountable to the rank and file. So we sit down and strategize: Are these officials doing what we say? We're also contacting those officials and holding them accountable, as well as trying to deal with the white officials too, something that wasn't done in the early part of the 1970s."

Latino Workers' Organizations

Edgar deJesús, Manager of ACTWU Local 2-H and Recording Secretary of ACTWU's Headwear Joint Board, has been active in Latino organizations nationally and in New York City. He is on the national board of the National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights, of which he is the labor coordinator.

"In New York City," says deJesús, "Latin workers make up a large percentage of many local unions, but you have yet to see the proportional representation of that rank and file base in the leadership bodies." There are various committees and caucuses which are working on this and other issues. DeJesús is active, for example, in the Hispanic Labor Committee, an affiliate of the Central Labor Council of New York City. "It is open to any Hispanic worker," deJesús explains, "but predominantly trade unionists. The committee sponsors an annual educational conference and sponsors scholarship programs for either members or the families of Latin workers, not necessarily trade unionists, but Latin workers. It co-sponsors an educational program with Cornell University where we teach Latin workers how to be shop stewards.

"The Hispanic Labor Committee also serves as an advisory committee to the Central Labor Council. It plays the role of trying to keep the whole Central Labor Council in tune with issues that concern the Latin workforce. It has representation from all the different industries.

"We push for the education of rank and file workers to learn how to run unions. If it's a union that's failing in union democracy, we tell people rather than decertify, learn how to change it, learn how to run campaigns. In those unions that are good, we tell people, learn how to be part of building the union. That process is happening. It should happen at

a much broader level."

DeJesús believes that in other cities it would make sense to work through a local Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA) chapter.

In some unions Latino caucuses are active, says deJesús. "In the Public Employees Federation in New York they have an Hispanic Labor Committee. It's an official caucus of the union. The United Federation of Teachers in New York has recently formed an Hispanic Committee; it was prompted by controversial issues like bilingual education. In New York there is a LCLAA chapter within AFSCME. The IBEW, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, has a Latin ethnic caucus called the Santiago Iglesias Committee. (Santiago Iglesias was a unionist in Puerto Rico.)"

DeJesús believes that to some extent there is an emerging Latino identity, beyond the sense of identity as Puerto Ricans or Dominicans, for example. He gives the example of the Hispanic Labor Committee itself, which was originally founded as the Puerto Rican Labor Committee. Today the Committee has members not only from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic but from many other countries in Central and South America.

Recently deJesús helped to organize a Northeast Latin Labor Conference with participation of Latinos from many different nationalities. The conference addressed such issues as organizing the unorganized, fighting for union democracy, and improving the situation of Latin women workers.

"I think that Latin labor activists have a dual task," says deJesús. "On the one hand, we have to be part of the American labor movement, and fight to build it along progressive lines and fight to empower workers of all nationalities. We have a particular responsibility to Latin workers.

"On the other hand we have to play a role within the Latin movement, whether the Puerto Rican civil rights movement or Chicano civil rights movement or whatever. We have to play the role of bridging the gap. Because when you bring a rising Latin civil rights movement and you bridge it together with the labor movement, both are going to benefit. There's a need to do that much more conscientiously. A lot of my efforts are guided by that vision, of bringing those two social movements together."

Role of the Rainbow

When African-Americans and Latinos have fought in the political arena, this has sometimes led to mobilization within the unions as well. This was the case in some Black mayoral races of the 1970s and 80s, such as Harold Washington's campaign for mayor of Chicago and the unsuccessful bid by Mel King in Boston.

"For example," says Bill Fletcher, "in 1983 when Mel King ran for mayor, District 65 was basically mobilized around the campaign. I don't mean that people simply passed endorsements or gave money, but the workers used the union as a vehicle for politi-

cal action.

"My sense, from talking to people in other cities, is that that's been true in a number of places. Where certain kinds of political campaigns strike a nerve, particularly around the empowerment of people of color, the unions can become vehicles of political action."

However, says Fletcher, these mobilizations have generally been temporary, tending to fold after the particular campaign was over. The same thing happened with Jesse Jackson's campaign for president and the formation of the Rainbow Coalition. "Rainbow Labor Committees were formed in several areas," says Fletcher, "San Diego, Boston, New Jersey, and Washington, D.C." In some areas these committees were involved in strike support and other non-electoral activities. "When the Jackson presidential campaign got moving," says Fletcher, "everything collapsed into the campaign, as one would expect. Then they ran into problems when Jackson pushed his vision of what the Rainbow Coalition should be in March of 1989. The committees basically could no longer be autonomous."

Following the campaign, a Rainbow Labor Committee did continue to function for a while in Boston, made up of local union activists and officials. But the committee never found a distinct role for itself.

Fletcher believes that "there is something very specific and important about a Rainbow labor approach, as opposed to simply traditional militant trade unionism." This approach—the fight for the democratic rights of minorities, the building of a multi-racial coalition, and the fight for political power—has something important to contribute to both the labor movement and the movements of people of color.

Conclusions

Racism is a problem that will not be resolved within the workplace and the labor movement unless it is also resolved in society as a whole. Overcoming racism will require a new civil rights movement which includes not only African-Americans and the more established Latino nationalities, such as Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, but also the new immigrants—Salvadorans and Guatemalans, Blacks from Haiti, Asians from Korea and Vietnam. A successful civil rights movement must also involve millions of white Americans and Canadians.

However, the fact that racism is an overarching social issue in no way absolves the unions of their responsibility to deal with the question.

This chapter has included a variety of tactics and organizational forms that Black and Latino workers tried during the 1980s to confront the problems of racism. These ranged from minority caucuses to cross-union pressure groups to petitions to one-on-one shop floor confrontation. But the Reaganite 1980's were a decade when many of the previous gains of minorities were eroded throughout society, not only in the workplace. People of color, sometimes together with white workers, fought the right fight against racism in

the workplace and sometimes racism on the part of unions, but in the face of the employers' offensive and a conservative Administration, there were no magic formulas.

As both Bill Fletcher and Edgar deJesús pointed out, new and refined strategies to confront racism on the job and in the unions will have to be closely tied to minority workers' larger struggle for social justice and



political power. This does not mean simply "a union card and a voter registration card," as the AFL-CIO sees it, but rather building an alliance between the labor movement and the civil rights movement.

The possibility of a new civil rights movement within the labor movement is directly tied to the prospects of a rank and file reform movement within labor. Selwyn Rogers makes the point that minority workers need to ally with the reform movements within the unions and vice versa. What is needed is a social movement for both minority rights and workers' rights.

Action Questions

1. What is the racial, ethnic, national and linguistic make-up of your workplace? How do the different groups of workers define themselves?
2. What is the history of the different ethnic groups in your workplace? How and when did each ethnic group begin working there? Why was that? Was it simply the population that was in the area? Was it an employer policy? And if so what was the employer's motive? Was it the result of a lawsuit or a consent decree? How have the groups changed over the years?
3. What is the history of the different ethnic

groups' participation in your union? Are all ethnic groups well represented among the stewards? On the executive board? On the union staff? On the District or International staff? What groups are under-represented and why?

4. What are the racial discrimination issues on people's minds? Racial violence? Racial name-calling? Discrimination in hiring? Discrimination in promotions and transfers? Discrimination in training? Segregation of certain jobs or trades? Discrimination in working conditions, overtime, shifts, or days off? Other issues?

5. What mechanism does your employer have to deal with racial discrimination in your workplace? Does it work? If not, why not? Does the union have a way to deal with racism, such as a civil rights committee? Does it function well? If not, what should be done?

6. What are the government agencies with jurisdiction over racial discrimination complaints for your workplace? Is there a city civil rights commission? A state civil rights commission? Do you have recourse to the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission? (These agencies should be listed in the phone book.)

7. If you were going to begin organizing around a racial discrimination issue, who are the people in your local that you should talk to first?

8. What would be the best approach to dealing with racism in your workplace or union? File a grievance? Go to a government agency? Circulate a petition? Call a meeting at lunch in the cafeteria? Go to the union's civil rights committee?

9. Would it be a good idea to deal with racial discrimination through a caucus in your workplace? Should it be a caucus of workers of color? Should it be a caucus of one race or nationality? Should it be a mixed-race caucus but made up of people committed to racial equality and justice?

10. Is there a civil rights group in town that can help you organize (LCLAA, CBTU, Black Rank & File Exchange, or a non-labor civil rights organization)?

11. What kinds of informal activities can you organize that will give workers of different races, nationalities and ethnic backgrounds an opportunity to get to know each other better? Potluck dinners or picnics at somebody's house? A party and dance at the union hall?

Notes

1. Philip S. Foner, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker: 1616-1973* (International Publishers, New York, 1976), pp. 433-435.

17. Organizing In the Non-Union Workplace

When workers begin to organize to deal with workplace problems, they usually try to form a union. But sometimes they turn to other sorts of organization, either out of choice or necessity. Some technical and professional workers find it hard to identify with unions. In some parts of the South and Southwest, unions are almost unknown and are not part of the culture. The lowest paid workers, such as domestic servants and day laborers, have been neglected by unions. And of course, many workers do not join a union drive for fear of being fired.

So sometimes workers form an association or some other sort of organization; some of these evolve into unions. The best example might be the National Education Association, which developed from an association of school principals and teachers into a genuine teachers union. And "9to5"—an association of women clerical workers founded in the 1970's—spun off District 925 of the Service Employees International Union.

Unions are usually more effective than other types of organization in dealing with problems on the job. But the groups discussed in this chapter are using ideas which many unions could learn from.

Unions should encourage these other sorts of organizing, both as a step toward unionization and as an end in themselves. The goal of the labor movement should be to improve the situation of *all* workers, at work and in their communities, whether or not they are affiliated with the AFL-CIO. In fact, revitalization of the labor movement will depend on organizing outside labor's traditional spheres and on creative tactics and forms of organization.

IBM Workers United

IBM is one of the world's larger multinational corporations with offices and factories around the

globe. It is also a paternalistic company which has been quite successful in discouraging workers in the United States from joining labor unions—not one IBM facility in the U.S. has been unionized. However, since 1976 a group has existed at the Endicott, New York plant called IBM Workers United.

The Endicott plant employs 9,500 people in the production of circuit boards, printers and processing machines. A little over half the employees are women, about 13 percent are Black, and one or two percent are Latino. The blue collar workforce has been shrinking and now makes up about 25 percent of the employees. "We have a high number of white collar people: professional, technical, finance, administration," says Lee Conrad, one of the founders of IBM Workers United. Conrad works as an assembler and tester.

The reason there is no union, says Conrad, is the company's "long-standing paternalism."

"IBM has always been noted for taking care of its employees with regard to wages, benefits, and dignity towards the employees. They also have a tendency when there's any kind of workplace issue to diffuse it by working on it on a one-on-one basis. So they try to stifle any kind of collective activity."

IBM Workers United was started in an area where printed circuits are built. "There's a lot of chemical processes," says Conrad. "There was a lot of overtime, and a very authoritarian management style in that building. A lot of us were veterans and younger people who just got fed up with the petty problems going on in the place, and decided to start doing something."

However, the workers found that they were quite limited by the company's conception of a grievance procedure. "They have a grievance system called the 'Open Door,'" Conrad explains, "which means you can go to your manager and complain, but it's always one-on-one and there's always been this feeling that if you did complain you were going to be a marked person."

There was also a 'Speak Up' form which you could send in anonymously or sign. But most people didn't feel very comfortable with it, thinking that once you're marked, your appraisal will suffer and consequently your wages."

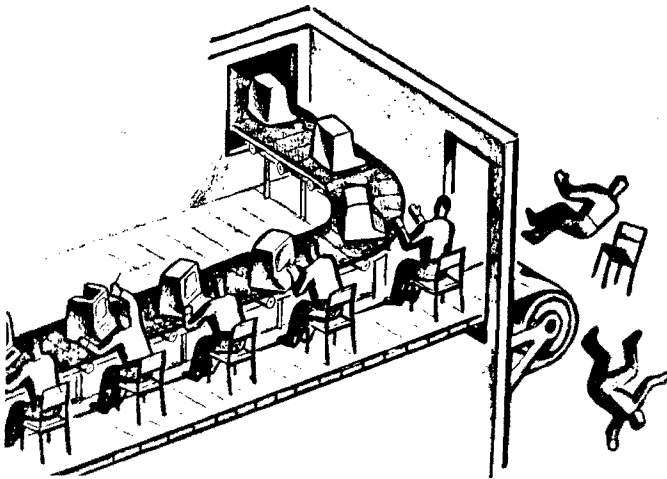
Conrad and a few other employees began getting together to discuss their problems. "In the beginning it was just a chance for people to get together and complain. We had no other outlet. A lot of times people would do stuff on the side, like send in a lot of 'Speak Ups' over a certain issue and hope that something would change that way. But this didn't work, because the tendency of management was to ignore the complaints, because they're unsigned and sporadic."

Starting a Newsletter

It happened that at about this same time there was a group called "Modern Times" with a newspaper by the same name that was doing community organizing in Endicott. Conrad and some co-workers asked the "Modern Times" group to show them how to put out their own newsletter. The IBM workers then wrote, edited and produced their own newsletter, and the "Modern Times" members handed it out at the plant. "So we were able to get our newsletters inside without us exposing ourselves to the company as troublemakers," explains Conrad.

The newsletter dealt with issues such as mandatory overtime, health hazards on the job, IBM's contamination of Endicott's ground water, and IBM's presence in South Africa.

After putting out the newsletter it was possible to attract new members to the group, but the IBM



Workers United remained a very small, secret organization. "We kept it pretty closed," says Conrad. "We had friends contact other friends, and that way we kept it to a small circle of people that we knew. That was a real drawback, it kept us real limited."

"We're still considered a semi-underground organization. We have meetings at people's houses. I'm sure we've got management spies now, because we are a lot more open than we were before. Some people are still hesitant about meeting other people, so sometimes it's broken up into different groups, so that not

everybody knows everybody else.

"Part of our appeal is that we're trying to bridge the gap between blue collar and white collar. We're trying to appeal to both and go after the workplace issues, because they tend to be the same among both blue collar and white collar workers."

In the beginning, IBM Workers United decided that they would not contact a union. "There's been a very strong anti-union sentiment within the company," Conrad explains. "And even amongst people that consider themselves liberals, some of the stuff the AFL-CIO was doing kind of ticked people off. And we always felt kind of slighted, because here's this big plant, why hasn't anybody come here and found out what our problems were? It was like we were being ignored. So we were going to do it ourselves, just as workers speaking out about the issues within IBM."

"These high tech companies have drummed into their employees the anti-union attitude. Our biggest success is that we've turned people's minds around over the last five or six years, also with the help of the company because they've been really screwing up lately. But not by coming in and saying, well, we're here to sign you up with a branch of the AFL-CIO. If we had done that we would have lost them day one. They don't want to hear that. What they want to hear is what's happening within their plant, and that they can have some kind of control over it."

Handling Problems Without a Union

While IBM Workers United is not a union, in many ways its members function like union stewards. For example, says Conrad, members often help other employees handle their grievances. However, this work must be done discreetly.

"A lot of times I'll have people with a problem contact me. I make sure that we talk outside of my department. Usually we'll go on break together and then I'll get with them after work. If it's a grievance with pay, part of the problem with IBM is that it's a merit pay system, and everything is controlled by your manager. A lot of times they'll base it on their appraisal, and it's a rating of one to four. Say the person got a drop in their appraisal, I'll have them start gathering information. They can get copies of their appraisal from the manager, and their work records, so we start building a case."

"We also try and get other people in the department involved. We find out who would be sympathetic to joining in a letter to upper management backing this person's claim that the appraisal rating wasn't fair. We start getting people to work together on things. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't, it depends on an individual work record and whether you can get enough documentation to prove your point."

"We also urge people in the plant to keep their own records. That's key in a place where management controls everything and where everything is supposed to be a big secret. We urge people to keep daily logs, especially if they're being harassed over work-related

stuff. If a manager says something to them we have them quote it and if there's a witness we make sure they get the witness to sign the diary."

Sometimes IBM Workers United takes on health and safety problems. "If there's a problem with a chemical," says Conrad, "we have to find out what it is, how many people are involved, if there's been any kind of health effects, if there's been any spills in the area, and what management's response has been."

"We get as many people as we can that are affected by the chemical together, and start finding out what problems they have had. We have people give us names of people they work with, then we'll give them a call. We've collected a lot of information over the years on high tech chemicals." If they do not have information on the chemical, says Conrad, they will contact a Committee on Occupational Safety and Health (COSH group) (see Chapter 4).

The first step, says Conrad, will be to go through IBM's own internal procedures—"go through the chain of command—the IBM way—and when that fails then we take it further. Then we'll call OSHA."

IBM Workers United has also taken up racial discrimination. "A temporary employee, a Black employee, got fired from IBM," says Conrad. "We've got people working with him through the state Human Rights Division and some Black organizations locally. We're trying to get other Black employees who have been fired involved in a 'class action' thing. First we're going through the IBM system, getting people to document their case and send it off to corporate headquarters as a joint protest."

"See, we've been in there long enough that we're almost acting like a union already," says Conrad. "Even though we're not recognized by the company, people are beginning to trust us more and more so we are able to do those kinds of things."

Getting Involved in IBM Workers United

Workers who express an interest will be invited to come to an IBM Workers United meeting. "A lot of times it's a traumatic thing for an IBM employee to meet with a group for the first time," says Conrad, "so we try and bring in people that he or she knows, to make them feel a little bit more comfortable. We try and keep it a small group."

"Most of what we do at the meetings is share experiences. A lot of it revolves around what we want to put in the newsletter, and what we're hearing from different parts of the plant." Those who come to meetings are asked to contribute articles or information.

IBM Workers United does not have a complicated organizational structure. "We don't have officers, it's a very informal organization. We consider ourselves all leaders more or less. Eventually down the line it might become more formalized, but there tends to be a lot of mistrust of somebody putting a title on you. So for now, we're just co-workers trying to change corporate policy."

"As for funding, like for the newsletter, it's usually 'pass the hat.' The newsletter costs about eighty-five

bucks an issue."

Conrad believes that the newspaper is "probably the most important tool that we've got. IBM's been non-union for 70 years, so there's been an awful lot of brainwashing. We use the newsletter to have them start thinking as a group, as employees."

"It used to be that IBM would lump everybody together as one big family. We've been focusing a lot lately on corporate management as the villains. We've exposed the huge salaries of the corporate executives and the bonuses. We've been breaking people away from that tie-in with upper management as being all one big family."

Building a National and International Movement

IBM Workers United is also reaching out to other IBM plants. "We'd like to get IBM Workers United locals going in as many plants in the U.S. as possible. I've done some traveling," says Conrad. "That's number one on the agenda, to spread the movement. There's an awful lot of dissatisfaction. But the problem is getting hold of all these people. We've got 240,000 employees in the U.S. alone."

"Our biggest success in getting in touch with people is by using the media. We've had a story on the front page of the *Wall Street Journal*, we've had stuff in the local presses, we've gone to stockholder meetings and raised issues there which get picked up by the media. IBM workers will read this stuff and eventually some of them will get in touch with us."

IBM Workers United has also met with IBM workers in other countries, Conrad says. "We started looking out beyond our boundaries and going up to the local university and reading stuff about IBM and international labor. I started getting addresses of people from all over the world, everything from other unions to community groups, environmental groups. I wrote to them: 'If you know about any IBM workplace organizations, any unions, please pass our address on to them.' And eventually we started getting replies."

Conrad learned about an international meeting of IBM workers to be held in Japan. At that meeting he met IBM workers from six countries; in each one IBM employees had either a union or a workers' council.

Conrad sees advantages to having a group like IBM Workers United. "We have more staying power because we're not going to leave," he says. "I've been there 17 years. We've been organizing for 12. No union would try to organize for 12. Maybe a couple of years and they're out of there. But the employees have a vested interest in keeping the struggle going, fighting piecemeal for whatever they can, until eventually things speed up and you get some basic changes."

Black Workers for Justice

Since 1981 Black Workers for Justice (BWFJ) has been building workplace committees, community organizations, and a movement for political power in

the predominantly Black counties of eastern North Carolina. BWFJ emphasizes the need for political action as well as union organization.

Black workers in the South have faced big obstacles when they have tried to organize: militantly anti-union employers, the weakness of the labor movement in the region, and the lack of political power. Moreover, BWFJ organizers feel that the labor movement has not always been consistent or reliable in its efforts to organize the South.

BWFJ began in 1981 out of a struggle against the firing of three Black women from a K-Mart store in Rocky Mount, North Carolina after they petitioned the company regarding discriminatory practices. Black activists helped the workers organize a community boycott of K-Mart that went on into 1982. Although the group did not win the women's jobs back, they did clear their personnel records and get the store manager removed.

Building Workplace Committees

"Out of that experience, it became apparent that there was a need for an organization of workers to deal with these issues in workplaces where there were no unions, which is the majority of workplaces in the South," says Gordon Dillahunt, president of Local 1078 of the American Postal Workers Union in Raleigh, North Carolina and the coordinator of the BWFJ Workers School. "In this state somewhere around six percent of the workers are organized.

"The ultimate is that all workers be represented by unions, but that's much easier said than done. For a number of reasons the International unions have not been very aggressive and consistent in their approach, so you've got so many workers that haven't even had the opportunity to vote on whether they would like to be represented by a union. We feel that you've got to build something as a starting point. So what we try to do is get people to develop workplace committees."

BWFJ has been active in ten counties of the Piedmont area of North Carolina organizing such workplace committees. They have concentrated on auto parts, aerospace, textile, and poultry plants and public employees.

Most of the workers there are Black, and many are women.

"Workers come to us with problems," says Dillahunt. "It may have to do with a racist supervisor who has said denigrating things to the employees. It may be a health and safety issue where they are forced to work under conditions that will surely result in somebody being hurt or perhaps killed. Maybe the issue is some takeback of a benefit, and although they don't have a contract, there was a company policy, and then the policy is suddenly changed without explanation. Or it may be a firing.

"We try to have them come together and form a committee to identify the problems. Then we help them see what's available to them: Is there a grievance procedure? Is there a company manual? Is there some kind of policy that would even allow them as in-

dividual employees to get a grip on the situation?"

There are various ways workers can exert pressure within a non-union company, says Dillahunt. "You can ask for a meeting with management. You've got the work-to-rule or slowdown type of approach—of course there's no declaration or anything like that."

Workers at the Allied Bendix aerospace plant have organized a workplace committee and won some significant improvements, says BWFJ organizer Ashaki Binta. BWFJ has been handing out its "Workers Want Fairness" bulletins at the plant and



Black Workers for Justice's singing group, The Fruit of Labor, performed on the "Organize the South" Midwest Solidarity Tour in the summer of 1990. North Carolina workers met with their counterparts in Erie, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Detroit, and Chicago.

helping workers put out leaflets produced through an in-plant committee.

"The workers at Allied Bendix have complained a lot about arbitrary harassment from supervisors," says Binta. "So there was an effort earlier this year to challenge management. One unit had a complaint about a manager who had taken all of the chairs out of the unit. So the workers put out a flyer about that, and then they called for a meeting with management. As a result management agreed to replace those chairs."

In another case in the same plant a woman worker was fired, she and other workers felt unjustly. The company has what is called a "peer review" system, where a committee made up of workers and managers reviews disciplinary matters. "So she challenged the firing by making a request that the peer review committee look over it," says Binta. "The workers thought her firing was arbitrary, and they voted to have her rehired.

"Workers in the plant saw that as a victory, and they feel like it's coming from the consciousness of the workers being a little more developed because of the leafleting and the on-going activities of the committee itself, so that they are more willing to challenge things than they have been in the past."

The committee at another plant, Consolidated Diesel, took up the issue of a Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday and won a victory. For several years BWFJ has been pushing this issue. The workplace committee circulated petitions asking management to grant the

holiday, and 200 workers signed. In August 1990 management granted the holiday.

"The heart of the difficulty here is the question of fear, and the ability of the company to retaliate," Gordon Dillahunt explains. "In a lot of circumstances, the activity has to remain somewhat closed and secret. So you may see a Black Workers for Justice member from outside the workplace playing a spokesperson role, because the situation hasn't evolved yet to where the workers themselves can be protected." On the other hand, says Dillahunt, sometimes it is better for a workers' committee to become public so that workers have the protection of the "concerted activities" clause of the National Labor Relations Act.

In some situations, BWFJ will help workers file cases with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, state OSHA, federal OSHA, or other agencies. Such activity both teaches the workers their rights and gives them other tools for bringing pressure on the companies.

If internal pressure does not work, says Dillahunt, "We might want to develop some external awareness of the problem, that the employer is not fair, assuming that most employers are trying to protect their reputation in the community. We might do a petition, which says that this is the situation at such and such a workplace, and we think it's unfair. People would sign it and we would turn it in to the company. We might hold a press conference and expose to the company what's taking place there."

BWFJ has supported three union organizing drives, all of which lost, but BWFJ remains in contact with workers and committees in those plants.

The Speak-Out

One of the techniques BWFJ uses to reach workers is the "speak-out." Workers are invited to a public meeting where they can stand up and testify about the conditions they face at work.

Writing in *Labor Notes*, Kim Moody described a speak-out held at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Rocky Mount in the summer of 1989:

Despite the southern gospel flavor of the meeting, the testimony is not about sin and salvation, but working conditions and organization.

Most of the 60 or so people present come from the Rocky Mount area. Most are Black, but there are several white workers present. They've come to tell their stories.

"They're working us five tens and two eights," says a white worker from a large high-tech plant. The company is scheduling ten hour shifts for five days a week and eight hour shifts on the weekend with no premium pay.

A Black worker from an auto parts plant says, "We're losing limbs in our plant. I mean people are losing fingers and hands 'cause there's no safety in the plant." One of his fellow workers adds, "Management just chews us up and spits us out."

An older Black woman from a local garment plant says she hasn't had a raise in ten years.

A Black woman from an aerospace plant states what every worker has experienced. "They just change the rules whenever they want. You show 'em the company policy book and they says the policy's changed."

Laughter, hoots and applause fill the hall. These workers, Black and white, men and women, high-tech or

sweat driven, have one thing in common. All their plants are non-union. And in this right-to-work state, management just makes up the rules as it pleases.

The meeting breaks up, but the workers don't go home. Instead, they get together with the others from their plants to set up workers committees. Dates are set for plant-based committee meetings and all agree to come together in a week. The testifying is over and the organizing has begun.

This speak-out was used to launch the BWFJ's "Workers Want Fairness" campaign. Rather than organizing only in one plant at a time, BWFJ is trying to build a community-wide workers' movement in Rocky Mount. A leaflet describes the campaign:

Workers in Rocky Mount and the surrounding areas are building a movement against fear and for dignity. They are speaking out against injustices they face at work. They are holding meetings and raising concerns about unsafe working conditions, low wages, benefits and unfair company policies and are beginning to file complaints and make challenges against all forms of discrimination and harassment.

Workers involved in the campaign came from companies such as Consolidated Diesel, Rocky Mount Undergarment, Allied Bendix, and Standard Products.

The idea of mobilizing the community around a workers' struggle is really at the heart of the BWFJ strategy. "We emphasize building county-wide support of church, county, and civic groups and small businesses around the workers' struggles," says Dillahunt.

At the same time workers are also mobilized around community issues. In the Black working class communities, workplace and community issues are often closely related and take the form of a fight against corporate power.

In 1984 BWFJ helped to block a request by General Bearing Co. (Genbearco) for an exempt bond to finance the expansion of a plant. Genbearco was asking the county to waive requirements that companies receiving such money pay a higher than average wage. As a result of a pressure campaign by workers in the county, the company both withdrew its request for the bond and conceded wage increases to workers at the plant.

In 1985 BWFJ supported the Bloomer Hill Community Association in a fight that stopped Consolidated Diesel from evicting Black residents when it moved a factory into the area. In 1986 BWFJ worked with residents of Rocky Mount to force city officials to rescind their secret approval of a Ku Klux Klan march on city property.

One of the organization's most important campaigns took place in 1988 when BWFJ helped the Schlage Lock workers in a six-month campaign for severance pay, extended health benefits and other demands. Schlage Lock was owned by the giant multinational Ingersoll-Rand Corporation; the Rocky Mount plant had been expanded in 1981 with a county-sponsored industrial revenue bond worth \$5.5 million. Then in October 1986 the company announced it was moving the work to Tecate, Mexico and to Colorado. Most of the Rocky Mount workers were laid off between January 1987 and July 1988.

A few of the workers contacted a local pastor who put them in touch with BWFJ. BWFJ then organized a

series of meetings, demonstrations, pickets, petitions, and marches, including leafleting the White House and attending the Ingersoll-Rand stockholders meeting. In the end the Schlage workers won better severance pay and benefits.

Building Political Power

BWFJ also fights for political power for Black workers. "We don't just simply raise economic issues," says Shafeah M'Balia, editor of BWFJ's newspaper, *Justice Speaks*. "We see the question of political empower-



Gordon Dillahunt

Schlage Lock workers in a 1988 May Day demonstration in Rocky Mount, North Carolina.

ment, Black political power, as a fundamental issue in North Carolina and in the South. It is our view that you cannot address workers' rights in the South without coming face to face with the powerlessness of the community."

In the ten counties in which it is active, BWFJ has fought to save Human Rights Commissions and to create a more representative structure in county government. Within the state of North Carolina, BWFJ has organized around a "Black Workers' Political Platform." BWFJ supported Jesse Jackson's campaign for president, emphasizing in particular his "Workers' Bill of Rights." At the same time BWFJ supports the idea of a labor party.

In the Research Triangle area (Durham-Chapel Hill-Raleigh), BWFJ has used the Workers' Bill of Rights as an organizing tool. "We've been involved in a city-wide mobilization in Durham to get the City Council to vote in the Workers' Bill of Rights," says Ashaki Binta, "to establish some standards to govern the conditions that workers are working under, particularly since we don't have unions. And many times public employees can have a union but legally they can't have a contract, so the Workers' Bill of Rights mobilization was a step to create some guidelines. The city workers formed a committee in their union, AFSCME 1194 in Durham, and they helped to mobi-

lize for a presentation before a City Council meeting.

"It was a coalition effort, and it's been quite controversial; there's been quite a bit of discussion back and forth in the papers about it, and of course the newspapers have taken the side of management and opposed the Bill of Rights. It's caused a real stir and discussion, which is good because it raises public consciousness about the question of workers' rights—things which haven't been discussed openly in North Carolina as legitimate issues like any other issues that are before elected officials."

Justice Speaks

One of the principal organizing tools of BWFJ is its newspaper. *Justice Speaks* is a 12-page, monthly tabloid with a press run of 3,000 copies.

The articles deal principally with workplace and community issues. Whenever possible, drafts of articles dealing with workplace issues are discussed and revised by the workers involved. The newspaper also takes up political and international issues, especially on labor movements abroad. Articles on Black history have dealt with Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X.

"We also have held training in layout and writing skills, which is targeted towards workers where we have the workplace committees," says M'Balia. "This teaches them how to do their own leaflets. People see folks at the center working on the paper, they'll come in and sit and talk, and learn how things are done.

"Folks buy the paper and turn the money back in. They may take five or ten and then sell them themselves. With the Workers Want Fairness campaign, we target certain places to sell papers every month."

Besides its distribution in North Carolina, small quantities of the paper are also distributed in other cities in the South and in northern cities such as Washington, New York, Philadelphia, Cleveland and Detroit.

Women's Commission

Black women have been at the center of BWFJ's organizing work. In part this is because Black women make up a large part of the workforce in the area. But it is also a reflection of the planning and attention that go into BWFJ's work with women.

"The Women's Commission analyzes programs to make sure they address women's needs and that there are ways that women are an integral part of the work," says M'Balia, who is a member of the Commission. "The Women's Commission also organizes educational activities with women."

These include women's speak-outs. "These are gatherings of women workers, sometimes focusing on one industry or one plant, or across all those lines, where women are encouraged to speak about the problems that they face in trying to work and deal with family and be active in their church or community organization," says M'Balia.

Black Workers for Justice believes that

workplace organizing has to be connected to the fight for social justice and the demand for political power. While BWFJ hopes that it is laying the foundation for successful union organizing in the future, the group is also giving workers the confidence to take on management—and other powers-that-be—today.

9to5: Organizing Women Office Workers

One of the most important groups helping women organize in white-collar workplaces is 9to5, National Association of Working Women. 9to5 has about 14,000 members around the country, some in its 25 local chapters and many individual members in cities where no chapter exists.

9to5's emphasis, says Ellen Bravo, 9to5's associate director, is on "getting people to do forms of collective struggle.

"For example, in Milwaukee we have a sexual harassment support group with more than 30 women in it. They all work in different places. Some of them have quit. Some of them have resolved their issues. Some of them are fighting it now. Some of them haven't begun to fight it yet. So they do everything. They give each other personal support and healing; but they also are working to change the remedies available to victims of sexual harassment.

"For example, they have spent a lot of time trying to get a law passed allowing the 'private right of action.' That means that instead of having to go to a discrimination agency, you can go to court right away. This is important, first, because agencies can take years, and, second, because you can sue for compensatory and punitive damages, which means emotional suffering. Right now you can only get back wages if you lost your job; if you lost your sense of security or dignity or mental balance you can't get a dime.

"We have a lot of emphasis on leadership development, on skills building, and having people feel comfortable learning how to do things. One method we use is helping people tell their stories. Lots of people don't realize that the most powerful thing they have is their own experience. Because they're not accustomed to speaking in public, or writing, they think 'What difference would it make?' They also wonder, 'How could I do that?'

"We get a group together, and people decide whether or not they want to testify in public, let's say at a legislative hearing on the need for health insurance. People just talk, and we transcribe it, and they edit it. Then we print it up, so they have their own story. So, if they want to testify, and they're scared that they'll get up there and nothing will come to their mind, they can just read what they have in their hands. Knowing that they have it, and also knowing that they can turn it in, makes them feel tremendously more confident.

"Plus, it is the most powerful tool. These women get up and say, 'This is what's really happening out

there.' And then when people see the impact of that testimony and they get letters from people saying, this is really important and thank you for sharing that, they really do feel that they're making a difference. Then we encourage them to go on to learn public speaking, so that some of them go out and speak to congregations or unions or community groups, doing grassroots lobbying."

Monitored Workers Network

The key is getting individuals to be part of a group, says Bravo. "Let me give you an example. Someone may call our toll-free hotline, 1-800-245-9to5, and she's being monitored by her boss, through her computer. We hear these horrendous tales from people who are being spied on and who feel like the enemy at work. Well, we now have this Monitored Workers Network of people all over the country.

"So we will give her some organizing tips. We explain how you start by identifying among your co-workers who you can pretty much count on as being interested, who you would rule out talking to, and who you're not sure of.

"And then give her some tool, like a questionnaire or survey that she can give to those people she can count on, both to get information about what's going on, but also to see if any of them want to get involved. We might help them write letters in support of a state or federal bill dealing with electronic monitoring. Above all we get them in touch with the Monitored Workers Network.

"We hope at least a small group of this network will come to the 9to5 Summer School in Washington, so that they can feel that this entity exists. And then that they'll exchange ideas and give each other moral support, and meet with the media and with policy makers. So they will make some inroads in exposing the problem.

"Once we get their stories we publish them in a report called: 'Stories of Suspicion and Mistrust: Electronic Monitoring and the American Workforce.' Reporters then call us up and say can we talk to any of these people, and we say, you can call this person in L.A., you can call this person in Omaha. Then they feel a little bit empowered, because they've helped bring the issue to public attention.

"We make them part of a collective. That's very important. The minute you realize: 'I'm not alone. This is not just happening to me,' that's a start towards saying, 'Therefore I may be able to do something about it.'"

Bravo gives an example of how 9to5 helps workers share their tactics: "Here's some women in an airline office. A new call distribution system was implemented, where there are now no seconds between calls. The second you hang up, another call is on and you have to pick it up, and it's murderous.

"So the women have been doing a number of things: One was starting with a survey. Then they've each put in some money to hire a lawyer, so that when one of them got fired, they had legal help and got her

job back. They gave interviews to the 'Monitoring Report' and to reporters in their area. In the course of these interviews, one of the reporters said to one of the women, 'Do you ever get to stand up?' She said, 'You know, you're right. We never get to stand up.'

"So she organized 'Standing up for your rights.'

At 10 o'clock everyone in the room stands up. It's like a wave: you do it and you motion to the people next to you, and they motion to the people next to them, until this large room full of people are all standing up. She said, 'It's just like Norma Rae.' Now, all they're doing is standing up and waving to each other. They have their headsets on, they're still talking to customers. They haven't really won anything, but they feel like they're saying, 'You don't own us.' It's a moment of assertion, that they're not robots.

"Now that's a great story to tell all these other women, and we do that through the newsletter and at our summer school.

"These women are afraid to talk at work because they really feel like they are spied on every instant, that there is no such thing as privacy. So they talk in the parking lot, or they invite people to a Tupperware party that turns out to be an organizing party. Whatever those strategies are we share them."

Identify Who Can Solve the Problem

In helping people organize, says Bravo, "We always help people learn that they know better than we do what their company is like, who the right person is to go to. If they sit down and talk to each other about it, they can answer some questions. We can help give them the questions, but only they can say, for example, who can be an advocate for them.

"We might have them start by looking at things that lay out the company's philosophy. To see if there's any phrases that they can use, like 'We believe in employees' well-being.' They might appear in the

company newsletter, or mottoes up on the bulletin board.

"And then the key thing is figuring out who to approach and how to approach them, and encouraging people to do that as a group.

"A woman called our chapter in Milwaukee. The employer had instituted a new policy for quality control. There are five people in the department, and they were told that they had to spy on each other. In other words, my work went to you, went to the next person, went to the next person. And if somebody caught an error along the way that the person before them had done, they had to turn them in to go on their permanent personnel record. Well, people were horrified, everyone was a nervous wreck, people didn't want to turn each other in—but they also didn't want to get in

trouble for not turning people in.

"So we helped them figure out a strategy. We explained their rights, so that they knew they were protected. They decided to write a letter that they all signed. We teach people the method of assuming the person you're dealing with is acting in good faith, even if you know they're a jerk. You find something to unite with. For example, 'We agree that it's important to improve quality.' But then go on to say, 'We think that this isn't the way to do it.' Come up with a constructive alternative, such as 'We would be willing at staff meetings to talk about errors, or to point them out to each other. We think the current method will cause more errors, because we're all going to be so nervous.'

"Well, when the guy got the letter, he said, 'I had no idea you were so nervous about this. Sure, let's try it the other way.' Now that doesn't always work, they don't always say 'sure.' Sometimes they know that it will make you nervous, but they don't care."

The important points, says Bravo, are "identify the person who can do something" and "decide what language they will hear. Should you have a meeting or



should you send them a memo first? What works with them?

"And people don't feel so helpless, meaning powerless, and they realize that there are lots of things they know."

In some cases 9to5 organizes outside support for a group of workers. "We had a group of bank workers," says Bravo, "who were told that they would no longer get insurance for their dependents. It would now cost them \$168 a month or about a week's pay. So we met with the group and we did several things. One was getting them in touch with a reporter who was writing a series of articles on the 'Have-nots of Health Care.' And we had one of them speak at a forum we had already organized on 'The Worth of Women's Work.' Then we helped them come up with a list of community groups and public officials who we wrote to about the problem. The bank workers did not feel they could walk a picket line, so we got community groups to join us on a one-day informational picket at their bank and we handed out a flyer to the bank's customers asking, 'Should banks care about kids?'"

Helping Choose a Union

9to5 also helps women who want to unionize. 9to5 has a sister organization, District 925 of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), to which they refer such requests. If District 925 does not exist in that city, Bravo explains, 9to5 suggests questions for the workers to ask a prospective union. "Like, who else do you represent and can I see a contract? Is there anyone you represent who is like us? How did you organize? What are your union's main issues? Do you have women on your staff?"

"Also you want to know what kind of organizing process they have. Are they committed to empowerment? You'd want to find out what kind of leadership development they do, how do they build a committee? Do you sit in on bargaining?"

Sometimes women who are already union members ask 9to5 for help. "We always start by encouraging them to work through their union," says Bravo. "We might hook them up to the Coalition of Labor Union Women [see Chapter 15] or to sympathetic women that we know in other unions to get advice about how to do that. Also if we knew anyone in that union we thought was good, we would send them to that person. Again, the same idea: How do you find an advocate? How do you figure out who are the main people that you might talk to?"

La Mujer Obrera Project

La Mujer Obrera [The Woman Worker] Project organizes garment workers in El Paso, Texas. Most of these shops employ between 10 and 50 workers; the pay is low, usually minimum wage, and the benefits are nonexistent. Very few are unionized.

The workforce in these factories is made up of Mexican-American (Chicana), Mexican, Black and

some Asian workers, predominantly women. Many of the Latina workers have recently been "amnestied" and given legal status under the immigration law. Some of the women speak only Spanish, some only English, others are bilingual. Over half are heads of households.

"Most of the work is subcontracted out to small shops with very terrible conditions, not unlike conditions in the nineteenth century," says Cecilia Rodriguez, executive director of La Mujer Obrera. "Women have no workers' compensation policies enforced, they're very badly verbally abused and often sexually harassed. They have no knowledge of how the American system works in terms of its institutions or its agencies, or its legal rights." These workers, says Rodriguez, have had no positive union experiences in either Mexico or the United States.

Rodriguez argues that the labor movement has not been successful in organizing in the U.S.-Mexico border area because it has not taken local cultural and political factors into account: "I sometimes think the traditional model of organizing assumes you have a certain ability to move within the system, and in the case of immigrant workers that's not so."

The unions are so out of touch with the workers she deals with, Rodriguez says, that "union" has become a dirty word. "We have had three groups of workers come to us trying to get us to decertify the union, and we've not been willing to go along with that, because we don't think that's a viable solution. We've tried to say, these resources are yours, and you have to learn how to work with it. But often by the time they come to us the workers are so angry they don't want to hear it.

"There was a point at which the workers in my organization sat down and said, if we were to reform the unions, which are the things we would ask for? They answered, number one, that leadership be changed every three years, so that leaders don't have a chance to get corrupt and authoritarian. Number two, that dues remain local and that they be used so that workers can see the benefits of their dues.

"In one of the unions the workers couldn't read their contract, they didn't know how their grievances were being processed. One of the union reps told them that this was America and you had to speak English. That creates a relationship of complete distrust."

A Community-Based Approach

La Mujer Obrera's approach is influenced by the theology of liberation and is based on organizing women both at work and in the community.

Rodriguez believes that "the issue of workers' rights has to be a community issue and the minute you isolate it you set yourself up for being called a special interest. I think the unions have failed to take the issue of low wages and make it a community issue. If you don't have a good salary, you can't buy health services, you can't send your kids to school, you can't eat well.

"What are we struggling for? Are we struggling

to just better the working conditions in the sweatshops or are we struggling to have a different, more just society? If you say, we're struggling to have a different, more just society, then that means you've got to go outside the factory, and you've got to look at your tactics and your strategy in a broader way."

La Mujer Obrera is a membership organization with around 475 members. It has a staff of six and 20 volunteers, some of whom give as much as 20 hours a week. Its three programs are mutual aid, organizing, and political education.

"The mutual aid program," Rodriguez explains, "is to give workers a sense of class solidarity, because



La Mujer Obrera organized a seven-day hunger strike in August 1990 to protest the nonpayment of wages to garment workers and to demand that the El Paso City Council regulate garment companies. The hunger strikers camped out in a downtown park across from the courthouse.

the workers are now divided up into these small shops and they can't even see each other." The organization makes small emergency loans to members who are laid off. There is also a consumer buying club. Members buy food in bulk, re-package it, and distribute it monthly.

"The other aspect of the mutual aid program is more of a political idea," says Rodriguez. "We talk about, What do you do to one another when you compete in the factory? It's helping them analyze how workers are divided one against the other, and how they can turn that around in their favor."

Part of La Mujer Obrera's organizing program, says Rodriguez, "is what we call an employee manual, which is a booklet that the workers themselves will write. It will say things such as 'as a worker I have a right to be treated with dignity and not to be insulted verbally,' or 'as a worker I have a right to a safe workplace,' or 'as a worker I have a right to be free from sexual harassment.' It's a set of ideas that's pro-worker, that the workers themselves can go into the factory and talk to other workers about. They can say, 'Well, as workers do we or do we not have these rights?'"

La Mujer Obrera intends to help workers form committees to negotiate the employee manual with management, using the "protected concerted ac-

tivities" clause of the National Labor Relations Act.

Recently La Mujer Obrera helped a committee at a 150-person garment shop in its attempt to become the legally recognized bargaining agent. The employer used intimidation and bribery to defeat the workers' committee in the NLRB election, but only by 13 votes.

La Mujer Obrera's education program includes the group's newsletter, *El Engomado* (which the women write and develop themselves), wall murals, and plays.

"The wall mural," explains Rodriguez, "is very popular in Latin America. Workers put their ideas on a big sheet of paper and then use pictures to illustrate them. You talk about your oppression, talk about what it does to you as a human being, how it affects your family, what your alternatives are, and then you pose a solution. We present these murals to the workers once a week, where they have an opportunity to discuss what kinds of options are available to them.

"We also use role plays and actual one-act plays where we try to portray in a simple form the problems that they're faced with inside the factory." There are also discussion circles and classes for workers on the economy and the political structure.

La Mujer Obrera tries to turn its organizing campaigns into educational experiences, Rodriguez explains. "The traditional way to conduct a campaign is that you really fight it out to win that issue. We try to structure our campaigns so that they're learning opportunities. During the process we sit down and talk about how effective the leaflets were, what the workers' reaction was. We take a critical look. And that's been really, really hard, because when you don't have a lot of self-confidence, you don't want to criticize anything you do. But as time goes along, they begin to see that some of their mistakes add up and they become negatives if they don't address them. So that's been a very important part of the process which we call a political education."

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The future of the labor movement depends in large measure on our ability to reach out and organize the millions of workers in non-union situations. The AFL-CIO, the International unions, and local unions should view experiments like those we have described here as important contributions towards labor organizing. Efforts like these should be shown solidarity by the unions in every way, including financial assistance. Whether or not these organizations become bridges to unions, they are an important way for workers to fight for a better life.

Action Questions

(Please remember that in organizing in a non-union workplace you must be careful. Whether or not a union is involved, your activities may be legally protected because of the "protected concerted activities" clause of the National Labor Relations Act—but justice can be slow.)

1. What are the most serious problems at your

workplace? Make a list.

2. What groups of workers are affected by each problem? Make lists of the problems and the workers affected. Which group is most likely to want to do something about its problem?

3. Who are the two or three workers you can trust? Where is a safe place that you could talk to them?

4. Would it make sense to start your organizing with a social event at which workplace questions could be brought up?

5. What does management say about its management-employee relations? Is there something in its literature that might be helpful in organizing? Does it say all workers will be treated equally or fairly?

6. Is there a company employee manual? If so, what does it say about employees' rights? Is there a grievance procedure? Can you use it to organize or to deal with a particular grievance?

7. Who is the person in management who has the power either to a) deal with your group's problem or b) be an advocate on your group's behalf? How can your group collectively approach this person from a position of strength? A petition? A letter? A meeting?

8. What laws and government regulations cover your workplace? (You may have to get help from outside sources to answer this question, but it is an important one.) Are you covered by federal or state Equal

Employment Opportunity (or Fair Employment Practices) guidelines? By federal veterans guidelines? Federal or state OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration)? What government agencies or laws can you use to strengthen your hand at work?

9. What kind of community support can you muster for your problems on the job? Would churches, social organizations or community organizations help? A women's organization or civil rights group?

10. How can you use the media? Has management done something blatantly unjust that might interest the media? Is the company engaged in any illegal activities? Are there health and safety or environmental practices which might be of interest to the media?

11. Do you have sources of free or cheap outside legal help? Is there a National Lawyers Guild chapter in the area? Is there a civil rights or women's group which can recommend legal help?

12. Is it appropriate to try to organize a union? Or would it be better to organize an informal group?

13. If you want to organize a union, will you organize independently or will you request to join an existing union? Do you know how you will evaluate a union to decide whether it's right for your workplace? See the questions at the end of Chapter 18 for some guidelines.

Organizing the Unorganized 18.

"Organize the unorganized." Who in the labor movement could disagree? This slogan has been one of labor's "urgent tasks" for so long that very few union leaders feel uncomfortable with the lack of urgency they show in carrying it out.

At the risk of sounding like the boy who cried "Wolf": in the 1990's organizing the unorganized is labor's most urgent task. Organizing is no longer a question simply of going after the "right-to-work" South; new non-union shops are opening up in the Midwest as well. Existing union jobs are fast being replaced by non-union ones. Older unionized plants close and non-union ones open up; new technology is used to shift work from union workers to supervisors; and employers contract out more and more work. Today, only 16 percent of the labor force are union members, compared to 33 percent in the 1950s. Looking at the private sector alone the picture is even worse: a decline from 35 percent to 12 percent of the labor force.

The corporate byword is "lean and mean"—get those high-priced union workers off your own payroll—buy their services from a minimum-wage outfit instead. This is as true in the public sector as in manufacturing, as privatization spreads. Since it goes against the whole purpose of unionism for unions to try to compete with low-price competitors, *the only antidote to contracting out is to organize the contractors.*

Yet today labor does less organizing than it used to. The proportion of the labor force that was involved in a successful union representation election declined from .25 percent in 1978 to .01 percent in 1988. While, as we shall see, some organizers are now bypassing the National Labor Relations Board, this approach is nowhere near making up for the general decline in organizing efforts.

Recruiting workers into new bargaining units is usually seen as the job of professional organizers, staffers of national or international unions. Because there

are manuals that tell staffers how to do this in great detail, we will not attempt to repeat much of that advice here. Instead, we want to emphasize how local unions themselves can go out and organize, and some innovative tactics that truly organize the new union members (not just unionize them). We include two examples of local union organizing committees, and then two examples where workers went on strike to force their employers to recognize their union.

For related information, see Chapters 17 on Non-union Workplaces and 14 on Immigrant Workers. For an excellent example of an organizing drive and subsequent strike for a first contract, see in Chapter 20 the story of the Yale University clerical and technical workers. And see the appendix on Resources for some organizing manuals.

Teamster Women's Committee Helps Organize Women Drivers

The best organizers are often rank and file workers who believe in unions because they themselves have benefited from belonging to one. Sandy Pope tells how Teamster Local 407 in Cleveland used two rank and file committees to do organizing, both the organizing committee and the women's committee.

Pope was a warehouse worker and a truck driver. "The organizing committee," she explains, "had 20 or 25 members, mainly stewards but also some rank and filers. It wasn't too tightly organized, but you had to attend the workshops. We gave points to the people who attended the meetings, and then after acquiring a certain number of points you would get an organizing committee jacket, and that made you an organizer.

"We did some workshops explaining the first steps in organizing, so that they could make the first contacts with people and do it without getting the

people in trouble. They had to understand enough about the law so that they could defuse people's fears about organizing.

"Many of these employers go to seminars on how to keep out a union, and even these small companies are sophisticated on tactics. So we had to teach our members how not to get their people in trouble, and that there would have to be follow-up.

"We found that all of our leads came from our own members. We never had to go out in search of a place to organize. Teamsters have the advantage of visiting many companies, and at every union meeting one of the rank and file organizers would get up and ask people to tell us about relatives or people working places that they deliver, and get us names and phone numbers. So we got many, many contacts that way."

The women's committee helped in a campaign involving school bus drivers. The School Board employed about 650 drivers, of whom about 550 were women; 80 percent were Black. The drivers had been in a public employees union and weren't happy with it.

"They had gotten a petition to decertify the existing union and had come to us with about 500 signatures to join the Teamsters," says Pope. "They perceived us as having more power and taking care of their interests better as transportation workers. The union that they had been working with was not familiar with blue collar issues.

"The problem was that all the people that they met were white men, and it was important for the local to put forward some of the women leadership in the local to work on that campaign, to show that there was some commitment to women's issues.

"So members of the women's committee went out to the school bus barns and we talked to them about being women in the union and what that meant. And we didn't hide the fact that we were a minority in our union and that it had taken a while for the union to pay attention to our issues, but we truly thought that they were making great strides.

"We treated it all like a brand new organizing campaign. Safety was an important issue. They felt that they were not properly trained to check out their buses, and that when they made complaints they were not taken care of. The thing we were able to lend to them was our experience as transportation workers.

"As women workers, they were interested in the insurance plans, and in any kind of support for them as mothers. They liked the idea of having opportunities for women members to educate themselves to go for leadership positions in the union."

The Teamsters were certified as the new bargaining agent, and the bus drivers won a better contract.

Rank and File Miners Organizing Committee

Since 1983 the United Mine Workers (UMW) have encouraged the creation of local union organizing committees. The local committees join with others

in their district to form a District Organizing Council, says Greg Young, president of UMW Local 1907 in Boonville, Indiana. District 11, which is all of Indiana, has nearly 20 locals involved in the project.

"We meet monthly with the International organizer assigned to our area," Young explains. "During the early part it was mostly just receiving training and studying NLRB, learning things we could and couldn't do in approaching non-union members. We're also researching companies and researching individuals in the company. And we're gathering information on people in our community who work in these non-union mines.

"In the last few months we've targeted one mine in particular and we've been going out and doing house calls. We work in pairs; we'll introduce ourselves to a non-union miner and ask to come in and talk to him about the United Mine Workers." One of the most important things, says Young, is knowing the constitution and contract.

The local committees have a good deal of autonomy. "The International still calls the shots," says Young, "as far as whether or not to petition for election or actually initiate a drive. But we decide what to concentrate our efforts on.

"In our union this is mostly done on our own time. Now and then there might be some off time from work that's compensated, but for the most part it's evenings or weekends or whenever we can. I think that's one of the best parts of it, as far as approaching non-union members. We're not just an organizer on the payroll whose job it is to organize. We're doing this because we believe in it. It comes off with a lot more sincerity."

Not only can such a local committee bring new members in, says Young, but it has a good impact on the members doing the organizing. "It's really been a good experience for members who hadn't been involved much, and who have had to study and know their own constitution and contract better, and who have come into contact with the non-union miners. It gives them a better appreciation of how good they have it. They take for granted what a difference working in a union mine can make in terms of health and safety, working conditions, hours, pay, and just having a voice on the job."

Striking for Union Recognition

Some union members are surprised to learn that there is no legal necessity for going through a National Labor Relations Board-supervised election to gain recognition from the employer. In fact, there are three ways to get recognition:

1) a certification election held by the NLRB to determine which union (or no union) the workers want to represent them.

2) voluntary recognition by the employer. This may happen after the union presents cards showing that a majority of the workers have signed up, often called a "card check."

3) a strike which forces the employer to recognize the union.

Some union organizers, fed up with the NLRB and the infinite delays employers can use to hold up an election and a first contract, are turning to recognition strikes. Understanding that not all recognition strikes will work so easily as the one described below, we include it here as an example of how this tactic can work when the solidity of the workforce and the element of surprise work to the union's advantage.

Gary Stevenson, formerly a staff organizer for Teamster Local 810 on Long Island, New York explains, "If we have a solid group, I'll go for a recognition strike. If not, if it looks like we still have some bodybuilding to do, we'll go for an NLRB election. But I would go for a recognition strike any day, hands down, because my chances on the street are ten times better than they are going to the Labor Board. *Because when people hit the street they become the union. The union becomes part of them, and they come out of the hands of the boss. They leave that zone of fear that overwhelms people.*

"Also, a recognition strike is different from any other strike. It's like a Blitzkrieg, lightning attack on the boss. In contract strikes, the boss is ready for you. He prepares financially. He prepares personally. But with a recognition strike you're blasting him right out of the ballpark. He doesn't even know what hit him. Sometimes they can regroup but usually they can't.

"Most recognition strikes, at least that I've been involved in, are successful. The advantage of surprise, the advantage of the militance at that point. Militance goes in curves—it happens today, it's dead for a year, it may appear a year from now, but once you have it you've got to run with it."

Stevenson gives an example of a successful recognition strike. "K. Van Bourgardien is a Dutch-owned company, located on Long Island in a place called

West Babylon. It's a tulip and flower bulb distribution company. I got a tip from a friend that there were some workers at Van Bourgardien who were interested in bringing in a union.

Strike at Tulip Time

"Van Bourgardien employed about 150 workers, all women, all white, and mostly middle aged to elderly. It's been in business for 75 years, the guy pays minimum wage, he gives five cent an hour increases every two years, no medical, no holidays, no vacations, no sick days, no pensions. He had women working there for 35 years making \$3.90 an hour. A real bottom of the line deal here.

"Early one morning I went to the shipping and receiving entrance of the plant, and talked to some of the people to find out starting times. Then I stood at the front of the plant and handed out leaflets, which is an unusual thing for me to do. I almost never hand out leaflets. But I didn't have any contacts. I found out later, many unions have leafleted this place. The boss's reaction that day was probably, so what, big deal, nothing's going to happen here.

"Anyway, I got nine or ten cards back in the mail. I looked their phone numbers up and gave everybody a call and said, let's meet at this diner which is about a half a mile away. I try to stay away from in-

dividual meetings, because the idea of a union is a group conception, it's not an individual conception.

"The night of the meeting there's a snowstorm, a total blizzard. So we're sitting at the diner, and all of a sudden—it was like a pilgrimage out of Egypt of people coming into the diner. The place was packed, wall to wall people, there weren't even enough chairs, and this is a pretty large diner. We said, 'Holy smoke! It's like we touched a nerve.' We immediately signed everybody up, some people re-signed. You had daughters, grandmothers, all women, all relatives. At that time, they didn't have any fears. Everybody was with them; that's the most powerful element you can have in an organizing drive.



"I said, 'Let's get everybody signed up and we're going to have a larger meeting this coming Friday. We're going to rent the VFW hall and get anybody to that meeting who hasn't shown up.' So the following Friday, the whole place shows up. We went over the union program, the benefits.

"I said, 'Okay, we can do this the easy way or we can do this the hard way, we can do this the short way or we can do this the long way. Let's do it the easy way. We can go for an election, the election can take place maybe two months from now, and we'll sit down and maybe he'll bargain with us and maybe he'll delay. The whole thing can take six months, we don't know how long it's going to take. In our experience these things get drawn out.

"Or we can go into his office with a huge committee of people and say, 'Here's the recognition form, this is the committee, everybody's on board here, this is the union, we want you to recognize the union now, we want you to sit down and start negotiating immediately.' We can do it that way, and if he doesn't give in, the hell with it, we hit the streets.' With this type of business, it's a massive distribution system, very labor intensive, very vulnerable, we'll cripple the guy."

The Committee Demands Recognition

The women decided they wanted to go the fast and easy way—a recognition strike. They put together a committee of 20 people. Stevenson explained that at 10 o'clock on Monday morning they would go in to see the boss, give him a recognition form, and give him 24 hours to sign it. If he didn't sign within 24 hours they would strike the next morning. "We walked in, walked through the place, rounded up the 20-person committee, in fact five other people latched on. We had six union representatives there for a big showing, we had people from the ACLU wearing the ACLU badges—it was a wild scene.

"We walked into the boss's office, we packed the place. We handed him the recognition form, told him, 'We represent a majority of the employees, we're from Local 810, everybody's signed up, we'd like you to sign this form within 24 hours and then sit down to negotiate a contract.'

"He was shaking and trembling. He couldn't even get the strength to tell us to get out, he was totally intimidated by the whole affair. John Carter from the ACLU says, 'I'm a representative from the ACLU, you have been served papers, and we expect to have a proper response from you very quickly, if you don't mind.' So then we walked out. He comes out following with the recognition form, holding it at arm's length and saying, 'I don't want it.' He drops it on the floor. 'Is that your decision?' 'Yes, that's my decision.'

"So at the end of the day we meet everybody on the sidewalk. 'We have his response, no go, that's it. We'll see you tomorrow morning.'

"At five o'clock the following morning the women show up, they put on picket signs and the strike begins. There was a one-week recognition

strike. There were only two scabs out of 150 workers. We won recognition and we got a contract in about four months."

The Ghosts of Century City

When 2,000 Los Angeles janitors won a union and a union contract in June 1990, it was a victory for the entire labor movement. This was for two reasons: 1) These janitors do work which is contracted out. Until they organized, they represented the dream of 1990s management—the "flexible employee." 2) They also belong to one of 1990s management's favorite groups to exploit—Mexican and Central American immigrants, many of them undocumented. By contracting out corporations imagine that they can escape unions. And by employing immigrants they imagine that they will own a fearful workforce. But the Justice for Janitors victory proves that if workers are willing to use bold tactics, management can run from unions but it can't hide.

The janitors' recognition strike was preceded by three years of multi-level organizing and climaxed in a police riot which sent 21 people to the hospital. Within two weeks of the police attack the employer had recognized the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and signed a contract. Rocío Saénz, an SEIU organizer says, "Many people started saying, 'Because the police beat us, now we have a settlement.' But it wasn't true. What the police did was a reaction to the effectiveness of our tactics." Her point is well taken. Let's take a look at those tactics.

The drive took place in Century City, the high-class Los Angeles business district where the janitors worked cleaning offices in luxurious skyscrapers. The Century City drive was part of a national campaign by the SEIU, launched in 1984 and called Justice for Janitors. In the 1980s the union had lost many of its previously organized buildings in Los Angeles, and had accepted pay cuts in others. On average, wages had fallen from \$7.50 to \$4.25 an hour. There was also a change in those doing the work. Over 90 percent of the janitors in Los Angeles office buildings were now Guatemalan, Salvadoran or Mexican, all Spanish-speaking, some bilingual, about half men and half women.

Three Levels of Management

The SEIU found that organizing janitors was complicated by multiple levels of management. Janitors usually work for cleaning contractors, who are retained by building managers, who in turn work for the building owners. A successful union drive at one contractor may simply lead the building manager to change contractors, resulting in the layoff of the newly organized workers. Therefore it was important to bring pressure to bear on all management levels.

The Los Angeles campaign began in 1987. SEIU staffers first researched the building owners, managers and contractors and hired Spanish-speaking or-

ganizers.

"There were three steps," says Rocío Saénz. "First was to strengthen the union in the already-organized buildings. We had to regain workers' confidence in the union. In the past the union had sent a representative only when they wanted to raise dues. It was a big change when we started visiting buildings with the goal to make the union strong."

The union helped develop a new layer of local leadership, elected and trained new stewards, and created a steward structure.

The second step was to organize non-union janitors. Saénz says, "We got a commitment from the union workers to help organize the non-union buildings. We would find out the places where they gather, we made house calls—just like in any campaign."



Janitors disrupt business as usual in Century City.

In the non-union workplaces the SEIU organized what was called a "functional union"—a committee that acted like a union even though it lacked legal recognition. The functional unions elected stewards, called "coordinators." Saénz explains: "If something happened they went to the supervisors. If the supervisors didn't want to hear us, at least we forced them to recognize that workers weren't afraid to talk."

"We created an open atmosphere. We didn't need any election. The workers said, Okay, this is the union, and everybody knows what to do."

"This second step brought us to the next one. We decided that we had to focus on just one company and give all the efforts to organizing that one company."

Here again research played a part. "We decided to target International Service Systems (ISS) because it was strong in Los Angeles and in many other cities and had several pressure points. For one thing, ISS had most of the cleaning contracts in Century City—one of the richest areas in Los Angeles. And ISS as well as the management company closely connected with it, JMB, had contracts with the union in other cities." ISS is a huge multinational headquartered in Denmark and the largest cleaning contractor in the world.

The campaign simultaneously pressured different sectors of management in Century City: the contractor, ISS; the management company, JMB; and the building owners, many of which were realty companies. The union also targeted the tenants—lawyers, realtors, insurance companies, motion picture industry offices.

"The campaign was conducted at three levels," says Saénz. "First there was the activity of the workers themselves, second the activity of the community, and third the activity at the level of the corporation. And then we combined all three of these."

Taking It to the Street

Justice for Janitors decided not to use the long and slow NLRB election process. The union would be more real and important to workers, campaign organizers felt, if it was the result not of an election, but of a confrontation with management.

"The important thing," says Saénz, "was for everyone to understand that we would have to take our campaign to the street. We could not get the building managers and contractors to recognize the union simply by taking a group of janitors to meet with them. We tried to go see the building managers with the workers, and they slammed the door in our faces."

In addition, life had to be made uncomfortable for those on the scene, the building managers, not just ISS, whose top executives were thousands of miles away.

Because the janitors worked in several large buildings, the success of the campaign depended on bringing them together constantly. "We used to have our meetings at night, at lunch time. We would meet just to share and report things, like how the supervisors were that day," Saénz explains.

These initial organizing activities went largely unnoticed by contractors, managers, owners and tenants, and of course by the general public. "You know how this industry is," says Saénz. "Janitors work at night. They're invisible. They're ghosts."

"So then we said, we're going to have our regular meeting—but now in the day. And that's going to change the meaning of that meeting. We are going to show everybody here, the tenants, the company, that we are united."

"Tenants don't know what's going on at night," says Saénz. "They know that somebody comes and cleans their desk, and they don't know who they are. We wanted to introduce them to the people who do that job, and tell them what our conditions are. The tenants have a very important role in all this. They are the ones who pay for workers' services." So the workers leafleted the tenants, letting them know what their wages and their demands were.

"We wore bandannas on our heads in the protests," says Saénz, "just to let them know that everybody communicated with each other. If the supervisor sees five guys wearing bandannas in one building, that supervisor is going to go and tell another, who will say, 'That happened in my building too.' We

Stephen Callis

also had union button and t-shirt days." When ISS forbade workers to wear union symbols, the SEIU filed NLRB charges.

Next, the union pulled off six short work stoppages in different buildings, which became progressively longer until janitors shut down each building one at a time for a two-week period.

During this time they began regular demonstrations. They marched on Century City's outdoor walkways and paraded, chanting, through building lobbies. Workers also began "billboarding," that is, holding up signs and banners along the sidewalk with slogans like: "JUSTICE FOR JANITORS IN CENTURY CITY." The ghosts had become visible; no tenant of Century City—and no one who watched the news in Los Angeles—could claim not to know that the janitors wanted a union.

In response to these actions, ISS fired four people—not many considering that the campaign covered 2,000 janitors and was accompanied by work stoppages and disruptive demonstrations. The company did transfer troublemakers, however. At first janitors were transferred to other buildings in Century City, but soon ISS realized that by moving union leaders from one building to another, it was effectively spreading the movement. Then managers wised up and started transferring people to far-away buildings. This was a setback (although it may provide advance agitators in those other buildings). Some strikers and fired workers were hired by the union as temporary organizers.

Community Support

As activities escalated from meetings to leafleting to strikes, janitors received an immense amount of community support. "When we say community we mean it in the broadest sense," explains Saénz. "It includes other unions, as well as community, religious and political organizations."

These organizations marched with workers on the picket lines. They sent delegations to meet with ISS, JMB and building owners. They met with Los Angeles political leaders who in turn pressured building owners and managers. Finally, the community raised money to help support the strikers and their families. A group was formed called Solidarity with Justice for Janitors, which is still in existence.

The janitors continued to come up with innovative tactics. Traffic jams plagued Century City when cars broke down in front of union demonstrations. The janitors upset the atmosphere in the swanky saloons frequented by executives, bankers and lawyers during happy hour. These Century City yuppies were horrified at the sight of a crowd of Central American janitors, wearing red bandannas and union t-shirts, ordering a club soda—"Ten straws, please"—and then eating up the hors d'oeuvres.

Delegations of janitors also traveled to other cities, such as Denver, to talk to ISS janitors there. This exchange provided moral support and helped them see that similar battles were being waged across

the country.

On May 30, 1990, 120 janitors went on strike. On June 1, a demonstration of 400 people, organized by SEIU and the support committee, disrupted business as usual in Century City. The police chief vowed that the workers would not get away with it again. Two weeks later, when the strikers and 300 supporters marched peacefully into Century City, they were confronted and then attacked by over 100 police officers, who used their nightsticks to injure at least 90 demonstrators, 19 seriously. Many suffered broken bones or multiple bruises. One person's skull and jaw were split. Another's face was fractured. One pregnant woman suffered a miscarriage. Over 40 people were arrested.

Mike Davis described the scene: "For two hours the Los Angeles Police Department sealed off Century City so that they could beat and arrest scores of striking janitors and their supporters. While horrified office workers and residents looked on, the police repeatedly flailed the front line of the Justice for Janitors march with riot batons, before launching a flanking attack that swept an entire section of the crowd into an underground parking structure. Those trapped inside were mercilessly pummeled: when they tried to flee, they were arrested for 'failure to disperse.'"2

Captured by photographers and television reporters, the police attack was widely criticized; the mayor called for an investigation.

Nine days after the attack, victory came to the janitors. ISS signed SEIU Local 399's Master Agreement for the Los Angeles Building Service Industry. Two thousand ISS workers would become union members, and 700-800 of them would receive immediate thirty-cent wage increases. ISS had first agreed to recognize the union but not to give wage and benefit increases. ISS workers in New York City—the largest janitors' local in the country—threatened a solidarity strike. ISS then added wage increases to its proposal.

In April 1991, wages would rise again, to \$5.50, and janitors would receive full family health insurance, vacation pay and sick leave.

At the outset of the campaign, the Century City janitors seemed to have all the odds against them. By the time of their 800-strong victory march, they had proved that determination and ingenious tactics could beat the odds. And the SEIU announced its next organizing target—more janitors, in 17 buildings in downtown Los Angeles. The ingredients would be the same: aggressive picketing, community support, avoid the NLRB. It worked at Century City.

Action Questions I

If you are a non-union worker who wants to organize a union, first look at the questions in Chapter 17, Organizing in the Non-union Workplace, to help you think about the organizing process itself. After that, before joining any union, you should call several unions who might represent workers in your industry and interview them. The following are questions you

can ask those unions.

1. Who does the union represent? What kind of industries or services? How many of its members do what you do?

2. If you join the union will they expect you to pay dues and initiation before you win a contract? If so, how much are they?

3. Would your workplace have its own local union? Or would you become part of another local? If so, how big is that local? What kinds of industries and services are in that local? Would you still have separate meetings for your industry, company, or workplace?

4. Does the union constitution guarantee you the right to elect your own union stewards and other representatives?

5. Can you get copies of the International's constitution and some local union by-laws?

6. How many people come to union meetings? What union committees are active? How can a rank and filer join a committee?

7. Can you get copies of current contracts for similar workplaces?

8. What is the union's policy and practice on concessions? On labor-management cooperation programs such as "Employee Involvement"?

9. Can you get copies of the LM-2 forms showing the officers' salaries and union expenses so that you know how the union is run?

10. Will they let you come to a local union meeting? Can they arrange for you to meet a group of rank and filers from one of their plants or offices?

11. Some or all of the following issues may be relevant in your workplace: How many Blacks, Latinos, women are stewards? Are on the executive board? How many immigrant workers? Is the civil rights committee or women's committee active? Are the contract, by-laws and constitution translated into the language of your workers? Is there translation at union meetings, if necessary? Are they willing to do

those things? How do they feel about negotiating clauses of importance to gay and lesbian members?

12. What is the attitude of the top leadership and local leadership toward disagreement within the union? Are there safeguards of members' democratic rights?

13. What other questions are you and your co-workers particularly concerned about? Make a list and don't be shy about asking—it's going to be your union.

Action Questions II

If you are a union member who'd like to get your local involved in organizing new shops, the following questions are for you.

1. Who would be good to recruit to a local union organizing committee?

2. What resources can your local commit for such a committee (such as money for literature or lost time, the time and energy of certain members or officers)? What resources can your district or national union commit?

3. What are the obvious targets for your local: suppliers, customers, similar plants in your same industry, nearby plants? Make a list.

4. Do you have contacts there—relatives, friends, contacts through work such as delivery drivers?

5. How can you tap your members' resources to make contacts?

Notes

1. Information for this section came from an interview with Rocío Saénz, SEIU organizer; Mary Ann Huser, "Janitors' Triumph May Be Future," *Daily Breeze* (Los Angeles), June 24, 1990; and Camille Colatosti, "Police Give Janitors No Justice," and "L.A. Janitors Win Justice," *Labor Notes* #136 and #137, July and August 1990.
2. Mike Davis, "Police Riot in Century City," *LA Weekly*, June 22-June 28, 1990.

19. Taking Power In Your Local

To carry out most of the tactics and campaigns outlined in the previous chapters, you need local union leaders who are willing to carry them out. How do you get such leaders into power if they're not there now?

This chapter is for union members who are dissatisfied with their local union leaders and think they could do a better job. But take note: the tactics described here are not just about running for office, but about strengthening shop floor organization as you build the strength of your caucus. These tactics are based on the premise that the way to get elected is to organize the members against management as if you were already in power—not just to organize against the incumbents. The groups described here see themselves as organizing against management first, and running for office as a logical extension of their shop floor activities.

The chapter will cover forming a caucus, fighting for a by-laws change, creating a campaign organization, running in union elections, and putting out rank and file newsletters.

ning an election campaign. Typically these Teamsters are in medium or large local unions (2,000 to 10,000 members); such locals usually have scores or hundreds of employers over a large metropolitan area or even a state.

In helping these workers, Smith asked the kind of questions that any group of local union members might ask of themselves if they are considering running for office. Bear in mind, however, that in many ways what Smith is describing is a "worst case scenario": one where the incumbents do not hesitate to use dirty tricks against challengers; where they collaborate with the employers against the challengers; where neither incumbents nor employers hesitate to violate federal law on union elections; where through graft or through bloated salaries incumbents have plenty of money to maintain themselves in office. Fortunately, most readers of this book will not face such an extreme situation. In addition, Smith is describing a spread-out workforce rather than one contained in one plant or office building. Keeping these cautions in mind, however, the lessons should still be applicable.

Beginning a Local Caucus

One of the organizations with most experience in fighting for union democracy and running for local office is Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), the reform party in the Teamsters union.¹ Founded in 1976, TDU has fought against Mafia control of the 1.6 million-member International union and for a more militant posture toward the employers. Over the last 14 years TDU has gained a wealth of experience in organizing at the local level.

Rick Smith, now an organizer for IBT Local 728 in Atlanta, was at the time of this interview a member of the TDU national staff. He often advised Teamster members on their rights and on the strategies of run-

Analyzing the Power in the Local

"The first thing I would do," says Smith, "is try to get a feel for the local. How many people are in it? Where's the clout in the local? Is the clout at a big freight barn? Is it at UPS? Is it at a factory? What's your steward system like? Are they elected or appointed? How much political weight do you have at your shop and in your local? How many people attend union meetings? Do you have a copy of your by-laws? Do you have a copy of your International Constitution?"

"I'm trying to get at two things with these questions. One, their knowledge of their local union and the International processes. And two, to get people to think about where they stand as a potential political force in their local. In other words, if three people show up, none of them are stewards, they don't have

Why Union Democracy?

The question of contesting for power in a local union is bound up with the question of democracy.

In a democratic local, power is something that everyone and anyone has a chance to go for. Challengers need only to convince the members that they will do a better job of leading than the incumbents.

In an undemocratic local, though, challengers must fight for both democracy and power simultaneously. They need democracy so they have a chance to win power, and they need power so that they can institute democratic reforms that will last.

What's so important about union democracy? Does it matter whether a union is internally democratic, as long as the leaders can deliver the goods for the members?

One of the underlying premises of this book is that union democracy is important not only because the members have the right to control their own organization, but also because democratic unions are more effective and more practical in achieving the goals of the labor movement.

A democratic union makes it possible to use the collective intelligence of the members to develop plans to deal with the employer. A democratic labor movement, through open debate among different viewpoints, makes it possible for the membership to make informed choices about union elections, contracts, strikes, social issues, and political endorsements. A union which gives the members voice and vote is more successful at mobilizing them.

Thus democratic unions will fight more intelligently, with more energy, and with a deeper commitment than undemocratic unions.

Formal and Informal Democracy

But what is union democracy? This is a complex issue.

First there is what might be called "formal democracy." Formal democracy means the members' rights under the rules that govern the union, the constitution and by-laws. The fullest formal democracy would include, among other things, the right to elect all officers, business agents, stewards, and other union representatives; the right to vote on all contracts and union policies; votes decided by a simple majority of 50 percent plus 1.

Formal democracy includes protection of the rights of minority groups within the union, whether of a particular race, sex, religion or national origin. And it protects the right to minority opinion: members should be free to advocate their views within the union, even if they are unpopular.

In addition to "formal democracy" there is also what we might call "informal democracy," the political environment of the union. If the union for-

mally allows members to voice their opinions and run for office, but in reality creates an atmosphere which discourages dissent, that stifling atmosphere may be more important than the seeming democratic rights. It is a difficult thing to ask incumbent officers to encourage their critics and competitors, but it is essential to a genuine democracy.

Participation Does Not Equal Democracy

As important as membership participation is, by itself it does not make a union democratic. A democratic union will allow and encourage the full participation of the membership in meetings, committees, elections, and other activities. However, if those committees and meetings merely make reports and offer advice, while a few leaders make all the decisions, then the participation of the members may create only the illusion of democracy.

Most unionists see the existence of paid union officials and union staff as real achievements of the labor movement. Because they are paid by the union, the officials cannot be fired by the boss when they speak out against injustice and they can work full-time for the labor movement.

However, it often happens that a worker changes when he leaves the workplace and goes down to the union hall. No longer sharing the day-to-day existence of his fellow workers, perhaps drawing a much higher salary than theirs, the worker can become a union bureaucrat.

Many would agree that at least some of the union's top officers should be working members on the shop floor, and that union officials' salaries should be tied to the wage of the workers they represent. (See John Clout's Stewards Corner article at the end of Chapter 3.) If these measures will not insure democracy, they will at least help discourage bureaucracy.

Free Flow of Information and Opinion

A final key to a democratic union is transmission of information. The members must have the facts on the union, the industry, the economy, and the political situation which allow them to make informed decisions. Except perhaps in a very small local where everything can be done face to face, union democracy is not possible without union reports and newspapers and union meetings at the department, plant, and local union level. These should be open to minority opinion so that the facts can be interpreted by other lights and challenged by other voices.

Democracy then is all of these things: the union's formal constitution and by-laws; the union's informal traditions and customs; the involvement of the members; the members' access to information and right to question that information; and finally the members' control over the number of full-time officials and their salaries.

any influence with the stewards, they have little influence except in their shop of eight people, then you have to tell them that at this point they have no political weight."

Usually, says Smith, the situation will have more potential. In either case, the would-be reformers will need to reach out to other members. Smith attempts to guide them through a series of steps which will first make them into organizers and, if that succeeds, then into candidates.

Intervening in a Local Union Meeting

"The very first thing they should do," says Smith, "is intervene in a local union meeting. If a group of union members can't do that, then they probably can't do anything else.

"Number one, get some people to go to the meeting. Put some resolution on the floor, it may be a petition, it may address some problem at work or in the union. For example, they might put forward a motion limiting officers' salaries.

"In most Teamster locals—and this would apply, I imagine, to other unions—union meeting attendance is less than five percent. So a group of thirty or forty people can either have a gigantic impact at a meeting or actually control a vote.

"To reach other workplaces, they would have to develop a flyer, have a distribution system to get it out, and make a splash at the union meeting. They probably wouldn't want to put it on the floor of that first meeting, but they would want to raise the issue, and they would have to have some people speak from the floor.

"Then, almost inevitably, other people would come up to them after the meeting, and say, 'Wow, where'd you guys come from? We've never seen you here. You had some guts standing up saying that.' Then you start taking names, you're making more contacts. You've made a political impact at a local union where you probably had never done that before. So they come away with more confidence.

"Hopefully through that process they've reached other influential people, because the influential people do go to the union meetings. They've reached other barns, they've made contacts over there. They get a meeting set up with those people and explain what their objectives are, be it limiting officers' salaries, be it running for office. They've made a splash in the local, the word starts spreading around."

Already these workers have gone through four steps in an organizing process: First, they analyzed their situation. Second, they mobilized workers from their own and other workplaces to go to the union meeting. Third, at the meeting they made contact with other union activists. Fourth, through those activists, they set up meetings at other workplaces.

"At this point," says Smith, "it's time for some more formal type organization. We're definitely into forming a TDU chapter."

In other unions workers might want to form a local caucus.

A By-Laws Campaign

As the reformers organize, they will want to test their strength and the strength of the incumbents. One way to do that, says Smith, is by proposing by-laws reform. For example, TDU advocates that members should have the right to elect their own stewards, rather than have them appointed by top officers. A by-laws change can be put forward by getting the required number of signatures. "Depending on your local by-laws," says Smith, "you are required to get anywhere from ten signatures to as many as 10 percent of the membership in order to have your proposed by-laws read at the union meeting." The reformers may simply want to get the ten signatures they need, or they may want to use the collection of signatures as another technique for mobilization, and pass petitions throughout the local.

"You send the by-law and the signatures to the executive board by certified mail and formally ask for them to be on the agenda," says Smith. "In most locals in the Teamsters you can only introduce by-laws in January. They're read at that meeting in January, they're read again in February, and the vote is in March." Other unions have similar two- or three-step

Some Legal Rights Inside the Union

A. Your Rights at Union Meetings. You have the right to attend union meetings, to feel safe and secure while you are there, and to address the meeting, subject to the rules of parliamentary procedure. If the chair rules you out of order, you have a right to appeal the ruling to the body, and have the vice-chair step in to count the vote.

B. Your Right To Form a Caucus. Union caucuses are not dual union movements. They are not illegal. They are not disloyal. A person cannot be removed from a union position because he or she is a member of a caucus.

The reason is that a caucus is not a separate union seeking to come in and represent workers to the company. A caucus supports the union and works to strengthen it. It does not seek itself to bargain with management. Rather it seeks to make the union do that job better.

You have an absolute right to hold a caucus meeting or demonstration. You have an absolute right to picket the union hall. You may bar hostile persons from your meeting, including even union members.

Do not be deterred by threats of libel or slander suits because of something you said in a meeting or a leaflet. In the union context, to prove a case against you it must be shown that when you said it or wrote it you knew it was false or probably false.

But be careful about statements you make. It is better to discuss issues, not personalities. Though you may be protected legally, irresponsible statements will not move things forward.

procedures.

"The first month you want to get a show of strength there. So you put out a flyer telling what the by-law change is, giving the actual wording of it, and explaining why you are doing it. Get that distributed throughout the local and ask people to come to the union meeting to hear what it's about.

"Then you're into significant debate. You've got to be prepared for people to get up and try to amend it, so you've got to have a pretty good grasp of parliamentary procedure. The second month reading is kind of unimportant, you want your main people there, but don't make a big push. You want to save that for the third reading and the vote. At that third meeting you've got to go full steam ahead, with flyers, with carpooling if possible to get your forces to the meeting.

"How does this relate to election campaigns? Many times we've done this as a test of strength. Because the local on a by-law campaign will bring out their loyal supporters. So if you see 200 of their people there, you know that's their core. You can gauge how strong they are and then run a political campaign against them."

Preparing for the Election

The next step will be campaigning for office.

Union officials will sometimes try to deny the challengers a list of the different workplaces where the local's members are employed. Any union member has a legal right to this information, however. TDU distributes a "Colpo kit" (named after the lawsuit which established this right), which is a packet of step-by-step instructions, sample letters and the like for getting this information from local union officials.

TDU usually recommends that candidates take their vacation during the campaign period and use that time to campaign. Or they may want to seek an unpaid leave of absence from the employer. Candidates will also have to put up some of their own money.

A good union election campaign will require one or more standard leaflets dealing with the issues and the candidate; in a multi-site workplace there will need to be one or more mailings to the membership. "In our leaflets," Smith explains, "we concentrate heavily on the platform rather than the candidates, but you put in your little biographical sketch: Joe's in such and such church, was in the army for nine years, and experience in the union, education, and so on. But we put most emphasis on the platform."

There will also be campaign rallies, says Smith. "We do the typical thing that anybody does, hot dogs and beer. We're also at the plant gates and the barns, passing out literature and collecting money. One neat little trick is that if the company won't let you on the property you go across the street, set up a table, and you get a bullhorn. People come then, it's something new, something different." If the company allows the incumbents on the property, or allows the business agent to campaign while he is on the property but

refuses to allow the challengers on, then it is important to demand equal time. "We just have people go there anyway, and force them to call the police and throw them out—which they rarely do. It's good politics."

The Campaign Organization

A well-run campaign will have a team assisting the candidates, says Smith. The ideal team would include: 1) a campaign manager, 2) a person in charge of all union and Labor Department protests, 3) a fundraiser, 4) a person in charge of getting literature printed and distributed.



TDU members campaign for the "Rank and File Slate" in Detroit's Local 337.

"The campaign manager coordinates the campaign and the election observers," Smith explains, "and takes care of all the details, so that the candidates can spend their time talking to the members. The person in charge of handling protests must be very dependable and conscientious, because all protests and appeal must be filed on time or they won't be considered.

"The one essential key thing you need is a fundraiser, somebody to keep the money coming in, and it's the last thing people think of. But your campaign is going to stall right in the middle if you don't have the money."

Finally, says Smith, the candidates themselves will probably play a large role in developing the platform and writing the literature, but they should not be burdened with dealing with typesetters, printers or mailing companies.

Election Rules and Observers

In the Teamsters union the local executive boards determine all election rules. "We always make motions at union meetings," says Smith, "that we would like an elected election committee and we would like democratic rules governing the election. Of course, they always refuse. But we win political points

on that. We can then say, 'Look, they're not even democratic, they want to run the whole show themselves.'"

It is important to remember that union members are entitled to observe the election process at every point, beginning with the printing and mailing of ballots. "Anything to do with ballots you can have your observers there," Smith emphasizes. Having observers present at the earliest stages of the process is not only a way to prevent or to detect hanky-panky, but also a way to mobilize and test the observers and make sure that they are reliable on election day.

Red-baiting and 'Inexperience'

"In the actual campaign and politicking, our candidates face all kinds of charges," says Smith, "and probably any dissident candidate faces them. One is red-baiting, but the one which usually has the most bite is that our candidates are inexperienced or wild. The incumbents say, 'We've been in office for twenty years, these guys don't know anything.'"

Smith says that in dealing with the charge of red-baiting, "We kind of do the ju-jitsu on them. We ask, 'Why are they saying these things? Why are they so scared? One typical piece we hand out is a quote from

TDU Counters Red-Baiting

TDU members sometimes hand out a leaflet with a quote from Walter Reuther, former president of the United Auto Workers, to sum up their response to red-baiting:

"Many years ago in this country, when the bosses wanted to keep the workers from forming a strong union, they tried starting scares of various kinds. One scare the bosses raised was the Catholic against Protestant. Another scare they used very successfully was the American-born against the foreign-born. Then they placed one foreign group against another, like Poles against Germans, and so on.

"All that is played out now. It has been worked too often. So now the bosses are trying a new stunt. They are raising a new scare: the red scare. They pay stools to go whispering around that so and so, usually a militant union leader, is a red. They think that will turn the other workers against him. What the bosses really mean, however, is not that he is really red; they mean that they do not like him because he is a loyal dependable union man, a fighter who helps his union brothers and sisters and is not afraid of the boss.

"So let's all be careful that we don't play the bosses' game by falling for the red scare. Let's stand by our union and fellow-unionist. No union man, worthy of the name, will play the bosses' game. Some may do so through ignorance, but those who peddle the red scare and know what they are doing are dangerous enemies of the union."²

Walter Reuther, arguing that union people have always been called Communists. We explain that this is a smokescreen, that they're not willing to deal with the real issues."

In dealing with the charge of inexperience, says Smith, "We say, 'Let's give you an example of what their "experienced" team has done in the past year.' And then you list the crimes and sins of the past administration. We also talk about what it takes to be a good union official: guts, knowledge of the contract, and honesty, which we have much of. We argue, 'Look, if we need an expert, we can hire an expert. What you're getting with us is rank and file people who are going to be tough, honest and live up to the contract, and build this union.'"

The Big Push

The campaign should build for the mailing of the ballots or the vote in the hall, depending upon procedures in the local. "If it's a mail ballot," says Smith, "your campaign push is immediately preceding the mailing of the ballots, and a few days after. You want your literature to go out at about the same time as the ballots. You want to do your heaviest campaigning in that time, because after three days records prove that most people have voted.

"If the vote is a walk-in, then you're hitting all the barns a week before and you hit your crescendo right when the vote is going on."

However, because you may have to file election protests and seek a new election, you do not want your campaign organization to collapse when the election is over. You want your supporters to be prepared to continue the campaign if necessary, and that should be discussed in advance.

Protests and Appeals

The general rule for election protests and appeals is that first one exhausts the internal union procedures, and then one goes to the U.S. Department of Labor.³

"Under the Teamster by-laws, for example," says Smith, "you've got 48 hours to make a pre-election protest, which our people are well schooled in. You have 48 hours from the point of occurrence of a violation—so you've got to be right on top of it. Then you've got 72 hours after the election. And if you're not in on time, you're not going nowhere, because the Department of Labor very rarely bends on these time limits. So people have got to know their constitutions.

"Then there's an appeal procedure. In the Teamsters it's to the Joint Council and then to the International. Officially, you can't go to the Labor Department either till that's over or for three months, whichever comes first. But we recommend that when the election is over, the candidates contact the Department of Labor and tell them, 'We know you can't get involved in this yet, but we would like to just sit down with you and talk to you about the case.' In that way you establish a human relationship with the Labor

Department officials. Then at your 90th day you're back, they're already aware of things, you've made the bureaucrat's job easier and they like you more.

"One other very important thing. If in fact you lost, and you're going to the Department of Labor, you've got some more campaigning to do. In other words, keep the membership updated on what the legal steps are. Tell them what you're going through at this point. Because you're gearing up for another election. If you just go away and nobody hears about it until you do get a re-election and you're back campaigning, you will have lost momentum."

Opening Up the Local

The side effect of elections, by-laws campaigns, even motions at union meetings, says Smith, is to enhance the informal aspects of union democracy, to create a more open atmosphere. "When your TDU chapter gets started the local has to respond one way or another, which creates some excitement and creates some openness. Now there is political debate, and there isn't just one side within the local.

"This is why I am always concentrating on union meetings. People say, 'Why go to the union meetings? Nothing can be done. Nothing ever happens there.' So we go and stir things up. We go and put something controversial on the floor. Then you get debate, discussion—maybe for the first time ever. The next union meeting, almost inevitably, more people come, because they say, 'Wow, there's going to be something going on here.' And that just encourages that there is a political life within the local.

"The union meetings are real keys to changing everything, and a lot of times we show people that it is possible. Yes, there can be discussion, there can be debate, just come down and see it."

Organizing a Caucus

In many local unions elections have become very depoliticized affairs, with the candidates explaining very little about the differences between them and why the members should vote for one group over another. Voting levels are generally low.

For the type of democracy and debate that Rick Smith describes to flourish, the membership needs a real choice among candidates. Do they want a bargaining chairperson who opposes concessions or supports them? Do they want a president who will appoint all the stewards or one who will back a by-laws change for elected stewards? Do they want the local to contact other unions in the industry or to go it alone?

In general, the best way to promote debate and provide this choice is through an organized caucus. But in many local unions caucuses have a bad name. They are seen as cliques, people who band together solely at election time to share the costs of campaigning. Some locals have a tradition of two caucuses who regularly trade places as the "ins" and the "outs," while the membership yawns.

Think Nationally

This book is mainly confined to organizing on the local level. It may be worth mentioning the obvious, though: that many changes of the type activists want to make in their unions will be difficult to make solely within local unions. National caucuses have formed in a few unions to go for power at the International level.

TDU is the oldest and best organized; the New Directions Movement in the United Auto Workers was officially founded in October 1989 and calls itself "the second party within the UAW." In the Mail Handlers union the Team for Democracy slate swept all seven national executive board seats in early 1989. The Hell on Wheels group described later in this chapter is beginning to link up with other local activists in the Transport Workers Union.

There are distinct political as well as practical advantages for a local group which is part of a national movement within the union: a national newsletter or other literature, campaigns on national contracts, contacts with activists within the same company, name recognition.

This was demonstrated during the convention delegate elections in the UAW in the spring of 1989. A new group of activists at GM Local 22 in Detroit put out New Directions literature to campaign for their slate. For the first few weeks they concentrated solely on the issues and did not even reveal their names. They became known as the "no-name" candidates. When the election came they swept all the spots. This phenomenon was repeated in quite a few GM locals, where novice rank and filers defeated incumbent officers for delegate, simply on the strength of their New Directions affiliation.

We have not focused on national caucuses in this book because such initiatives at this point seem beyond the scope of most local activists. But as the labor movement continues its unsteady trajectory into the 1990s—a burst of militancy here, a tumble into the employers' bed there—the level of dissension and debate over the best course for labor is sure to intensify. This happened in the 1930s as the nation faced a crisis, labor made a choice, and the CIO was born. It will be surprising—and disappointing—if more New Directions-type developments do not spring up in other unions.

We met the man who is now New Directions' National Organizer, Jerry Tucker, in Chapter 12. Tucker says, "Being the conscience of the UAW does have its difficult moments. But we have to oppose the policies which are tying our union to the apron strings of the corporations. The local union elections in 1990 were not mass migrations to our caucus, but they showed a measurable tilt in our direction. We have a major and continuing role to play in the UAW."

A caucus should be based not on personalities or convenience, but on ideas about how the union should be run and how it should deal with management. A caucus can be a kind of political party operating within the union, based on a coherent set of principles. It is an on-going organization, not something which surfaces only at election time. Although in some small workplaces it may seem overly formal to organize a caucus, in most the advantage is that a caucus can adopt a long-term strategy, train members, and provide the membership with a real alternative.

Naomi Allen, a member of the Hell on Wheels group in Transport Workers Union Local 100, says, "There are definitely advantages in organizing a caucus. You can't just appear at election time and say, 'We have a better program for the union than the leadership does.' You have to demonstrate in practice over months and years, and people have to realize by hearing you and seeing you in practice that you have a different orientation for the union, and that it's practical to fight back."

We are including the stories of two union caucuses here, each of them chosen because they demonstrate the importance of a long-term perspective. These groups are far more than slates; they engage in a whole range of activities every day of the year to get their viewpoint across and mobilize the membership. They take on responsibilities that the local union leadership should be carrying out.

The other point about these two groups is that they are both operating under very difficult circumstances: huge locals with hundreds of workplaces spread out across a city, and no union meetings to speak of. For these reasons a local-wide newsletter put out by the caucus has been essential. In our first story we will concentrate more on the newsletter itself and in the second on the caucus's other activities.

Ring the Bell for Democracy

For over ten years a group of members in Communications Workers of America (CWA) Local 1101 in New York City has been working to democratize their local. The Bell Winger caucus has not won major offices, but they believe they have strengthened the union by giving members information, a way to be involved, and ways to fight management.

Ilene Winkler and Dave Newman are stewards and switching technicians for New York Telephone. Their local has 11,000 members in several hundred different workplaces in Manhattan and the Bronx. Winkler describes CWA 1101 as she sees it: "The local has an entrenched, very bureaucratic leadership that has not held one membership meeting in four months of being on strike. [This interview took place during the 1989 strike described in Chapter 9.] It is very distant from the membership. Virtually all of the officers have been full-time union officials for over 15 years. They are very conservative politically and socially, and they are all white with one exception.

"The workforce, on the other hand, is very

mixed. The clericals are mostly Black women, with a very small Hispanic and Asian membership. The top crafts are mostly white men, although some sections are better integrated than that. There's a very sizeable Black membership, but the structure of the union is very white, very male."

The Bell Winger group came about after a long court fight to get Dave Newman reinstated as a steward. He had been removed by the local leadership for criticizing their policies. Newman won in federal court and "as a result of that victory," he says, "in June of 1979 a number of people who had been active in that campaign decided to put out a newsletter, and that was the beginning of the *Bell Winger*." Most of this group of about ten people were stewards.

The group identified several of the union's weaknesses. First, there were really no union meetings. "We have them twice a year," says Newman, "and they last about 10 minutes." Second, while the union published a newspaper, it was not informative.

"We knew we wanted to do a newspaper," Newman recalls, "because that was the only vehicle that we could conceive of that could reach people and possibly involve people as well. We wanted to stimulate people and to provide information. None of that was being done by the union, in our opinion.

"So we discussed, who are we going to reach? Are we going to reach the stewards? Are we going to reach the members? How is it going to be distributed? Why are we doing it? What kind of things do we want it to include? And we decided real early on that we wanted the focus of the paper to be against the company rather than the union. We would not ever shy away from criticizing the union or offering suggestions or analysis, but the main focus should be the company.

"Then we wanted it to be very open. In fact, the newspaper is called *The Bell Winger*, but the subhead is 'An Open Forum for Telephone Workers.' As much as possible, we would encourage other members to write about what is happening in their shop or garage or office. Or letters criticizing the company or the union or criticizing us. We have no censorship whatsoever—except if something is racist or sexist.

"The paper is open to anybody. We invited people on the executive board to write. We do get a steady stream of letters, all of which we print. People can write with or without their names.

"We decided the paper needed a gossip page, which we call 'Here and There.' It's made up of little blurbs from around the local. We might have anywhere from ten to forty little paragraphs, two or three sentences each about what happened in this garage, what happened with this grievance, a lot of stuff that comes down real heavy on foremen. That's probably our most popular feature. People usually get the paper and turn right to that page."

"The 'Here and There' page gives people a chance to really participate in the paper," says Winkler, "to tell about stupid things that management does. And whenever there is any kind of a shop floor action we publicize it, and we give people an alternative, membership-centered way of looking at what's

going on in the union and the company."

Another regular feature of the paper is a "Know Your Rights Column" dealing with a worker's legal and contractual rights on the job.

Bell Wringer has exposed secret agreements between the national union and the company on automation and changes in the work process. And more than simply reporting on events, the group has drafted its own proposals for strengthening the local, from how to win strikes to democratization. "We've examined the union books and published how they used the money," says Newman. "We took that information and formulated it into a proposal for reworking the budget and forming a local defense [strike] fund."

Trying to unify the membership by dealing with both racism and sexism has been one of Bell Wringer's more controversial topics. "We get race-baited a lot," says Winkler. "What's brought the race-baiting on us is that we've really tried to give a voice to the Black members and to talk about the company's discrimination. We have written articles about racial attacks and about South Africa and about hospital closings in the city. Some of us worked on the Jackson campaign, we formed a separate group called Telephone Workers for Jesse Jackson."

"The group is half Black, half white, so we get baited among the racist white element. There is no way to deal with that besides talking about the unity of the local. It's very difficult to deal with race-baiting on that kind of individual basis, because it's never said to our faces."

"We've also tried to deal with women's rights, who are also very unrepresented in the local. We've had articles on cases of sexual harassment in the paper. And discrimination in promotions is a big issue, because there is still an enormous job segregation between what the women do and what the men do. Several years ago we put out a pregnancy fact sheet which we've updated a couple of times, which has been the only source of information on maternity benefits. That helped build us up."

"We did a lot of agitation to get a women's committee in the local. There was a rank and file grassroots women's committee which struggled for a long time to get recognition from the local. They finally got it, and then discovered they had been replaced by a four-person appointed committee. When the local would only pay for their four hand-picked women to go to a women's conference, we raised money to send rank and filers."

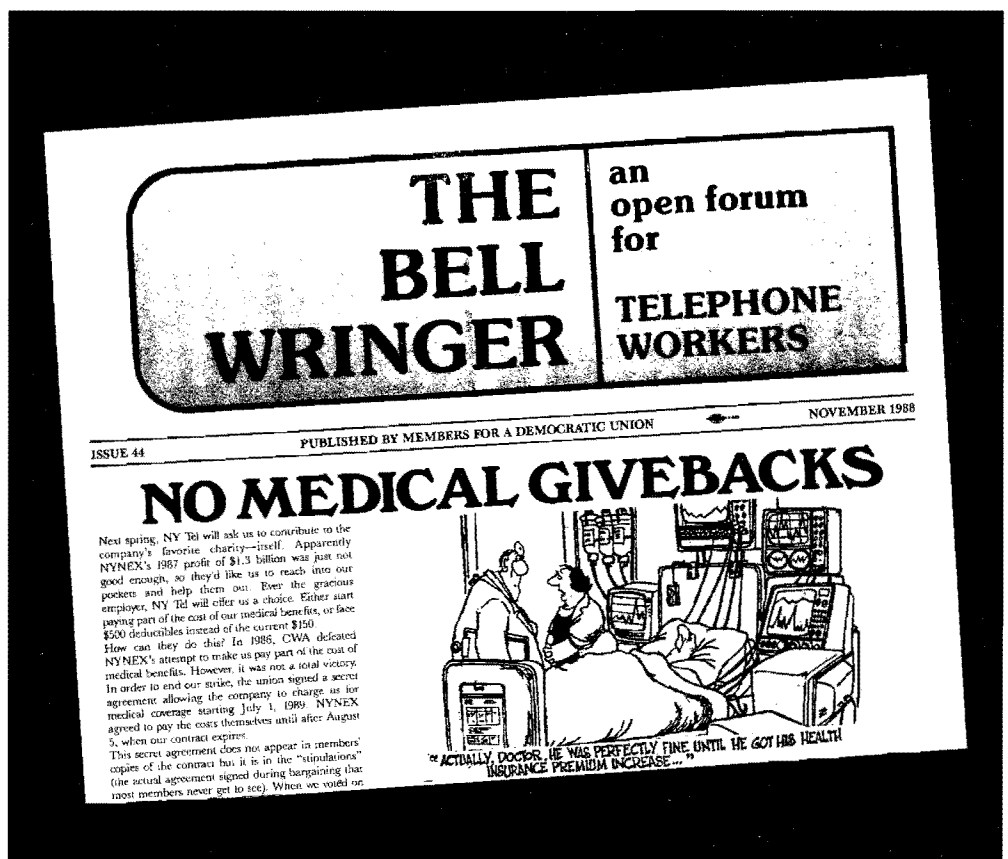
Distributing the Paper

The *Bell Wringer* prints about 4,500 copies of each issue. "It works like concentric circles," says Newman. "We have a core group that's relatively small, about 10 people that are the most active, and we all distribute it openly at our buildings and in front of other buildings. We have to do this before or after work. Then there's another concentric circle, a larger number of people that distribute it openly, but only where they work. Then there's another group of people that take a bundle and leave it around the locker room or pass it one on one but don't stand in front of their building and do it, because they are afraid. There's a lot of fear in our local. We also have several hundred subscribers that just get a single copy, or maybe two or three, in the mail."

The group also has an answering machine with taped announcements. Winkler explains, "There's a custom in telephone locals to have tape announcement machines, and so we also have one, only ours gives much better information than the local does, and we can take messages on ours. That's turned out to be tremendously successful. We get about 70 or 100 messages a day, and it gives people a way to communicate with us directly."

From a Pressure Group to a Caucus

When the Bell Wringer group was first formed, they saw themselves as simply providing information,



About 4,500 copies of the *Bell Wringer* are distributed by New York telephone workers.

rather than being a caucus. Over the years, however, that conception has changed.

"Initially we saw ourselves as a pressure group," says Newman. "We wanted to expose certain things in the union and the company, and hopefully the union would act upon these issues. And hopefully the membership would pressure the union for more democratic elections or to stop layoffs, or whatever. We saw ourselves as gadflies. We were not running for union office."

"Rather than take over the union, our hope was to open it up, so that we could play more of a role and that other people could play more of a role as well."

"Over the first few years we pretty much had that notion knocked out of us, because we found that it was absolutely impossible. Because the more we published, the more antagonistic the union officials became to us. It became incredibly frustrating to try and reform the union to make it more effective against the company—you never even get to deal with the company, because you are continually butting heads against the union hierarchy."

"We were successful in making a lot of members think, and in getting a lot of respect, but we weren't successful in getting fair and open steward elections throughout the whole local. We weren't successful in doing anything that it takes power to do. We decided that what's missing is power, and we have to take power. And most of us as individuals weren't really interested in doing that. I don't really want to be union president, it seems like a kind of cruddy job. But it seemed like a lot of members were counting on us for things that we couldn't produce, and that the only way to produce it was to take on that additional fight."

"So eventually we decided that we did have to run for office. We came to the realization that we're not journalists, we're not into publishing *The New York Times* for Local 1101. We're into democratizing and reforming the union, so we had to become a political party contesting for power."

Running Slates

In the next several years, the Bell Wringer caucus supported several slates for union office. On their first try they got 25 percent of the vote, on the second they got 37 percent, and on their third try they were disqualified from running on a technicality.

"The first time we ran was in 1984," says Newman, "when we had been publishing for five years. We didn't run as Bell Wringer, we adopted a new name, 'Members for a Democratic Union.' And we made a real attempt to draw in people who had not been active around Bell Wringer, and we succeeded."

"We had incredible discussions. It was really grueling, but it was great. It was the first time we ever sat down and talked about every single issue in the union. The composition of our slate was really important: it had to be Black and white and Latin, male and female, and it had to be diverse in terms of job title, with particular emphasis on the lower job titles. We succeeded in putting together an ethnically and sexual-

ly diverse slate for the first time ever in the local.

"The platform was mostly centered on union democracy issues: direct election of chief stewards, regular membership meetings, open committees that members can participate in. We tried to make it clear that democracy wasn't the be-all and end-all, but that it was a prerequisite of having a union that could effectively take on the company. And a key emphasis was the free flow of information and ideas."

"We were a little naive; we thought that we could win. And of course in retrospect, at that point we had no chance of winning."

"But there is nothing like an election campaign to give you access to the membership and to legitimize your going around and proselytizing. It's the American tradition. It's so legitimate that they can't knock you. I mean they can knock you 365 days a year when there's not an election. They can say you're a commie, they can say you're a fascist, they can say you're an opportunist, they can say you're a company stooge. But in an election you have a certain legitimacy, you're a candidate and you have a right to go out to the members and the members have a right to listen to you, and the company has to take a little bit of a back seat as well."

Over the last 10 years the *Bell Wringer* has been immensely successful, but it has not brought about the reform of the union which the Bell Wringer group initially hoped for.

"We have a fantastic newspaper," says Newman. "We have an incredible amount of respect totally out of proportion to our numbers. Most people view us as the union newspaper. We function, in a sense, as a miniature union, but we don't have power. We're not anywhere near achieving power, and part of our dilemma is how to translate all this respect and support that we have into something concrete."

In the fall of 1989 the CWA was on strike against NYNEX. The local union was not providing much information, but the Bell Wringer was.

"I think that the support for the paper goes way beyond the people who vote for us," says Winkler. "People have been grabbing up the leaflets we've been handing out on the picket lines because it's the only information they can get. The executive board will change the rules for the strike fund, and then not bother to tell people."

A Center

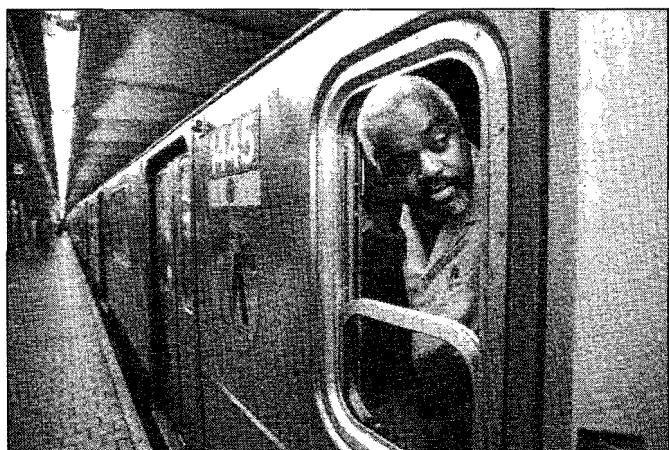
"In this kind of spread-out local it's really important for there to be a center that functions. The *Bell Wringer* has provided a center where there wasn't one. We've provided a way that people who are in different isolated work locations can find out what's going on."

"In a lot of ways we've held this local together. If it was strictly up to the leadership, most people would have no idea of what's going on and would not feel any sense of belonging to a union at all. They do feel a sense of there being a union because of what we have done, and even if we never get past this point that's very important."

Putting the Union on Track

The Hell on Wheels group is active in Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100 in New York City. In 1988-89, in coalition with others in the New Directions Slate, the group made a breakthrough by winning some important local elections and convention delegates.

Local 100 has about 35,000 members who work on the bus and subway system. It is by far the largest local in the TWU, which has about 100,000 members. It is organized into several divisions, each of which has its own executive board. There are many different ethnic groups working in the transit system, and there is a history of ethnic fraternal organizations, clubs of Irish, Jewish, Latino and Black transit workers. Be-



Les Stone/Impact Visuals

Subway conductor, New York City.

tween 10 and 15 percent of the members are women, concentrated among the clerks, with small percentages of women bus drivers and conductors.

Three Hell on Wheels activists, Steve Downs, Tim Schermerhorn and Naomi Allen, tell us about their caucus and what made its recent breakthroughs possible. Downs and Schermerhorn are train operators and Allen is a car inspector.

"It makes sense to start with the newsletter; that made everything else possible," says Steve Downs. "We've been producing *Hell on Wheels* for a little over five years now. We originally came together in response to a local referendum on binding arbitration. A number of people opposed the idea of binding arbitration, and we met to see if we could coordinate our efforts, and not always have to start from scratch every time some issue came up."

From the beginning the group had both men and women and included Black, Latino and white members; today it is a majority Black and Latino group. The group decided that they had to have a newsletter because of the spread-out nature of the transit system.

"The workforce is very spread out both geographically and in terms of shifts," says Downs. "The local as a whole never meets."

"We hoped to use the newsletter to find other people who were interested in doing something about

the conditions in the union and on the job."

"You can't get everyone to write an article," says Naomi Allen. "But you can get most people to read them. There is a core of writers who do most of the writing, and we bring the articles to a *Hell on Wheels* meeting and everyone reads them and we discuss them. Should this article go in? Should this one be different? You just have to rely on the people you can get to write to do the writing, and then you get everyone else to be the editorial board."

Petitions, Rallies, Contract Campaigns

A year or so after *Hell on Wheels* began to appear, it opposed a local contract settlement. The largest votes against the contract were from divisions where the circulation of *Hell on Wheels* was greatest, so the newsletter seemed to be having some influence.

The group then decided they would initiate a petition campaign. "We petitioned for amendments to the by-laws to guarantee the right to vote on the contract, and that we would receive a copy of the contract before any ratification vote," says Downs. "That enabled us to involve a number of our supporters in a more active way, in the petitioning and arguing for these points. We got a fair number of signatures. We didn't expect to affect the by-laws, and we didn't. But we got a lot of support for this, and were able to draw another half dozen people into the core of the committee."

"That same year, in 1988, we had a contract in the spring and then an election in the fall. The contract campaign was largely an educational campaign. We put out three leaflets with information on the contract. One leaflet focused on the question of what it would take to win a strike. A second had arguments against givebacks that affected new hires. The third leaflet listed all the problems in the contract and argued a 'no' vote."

None of the divisions rejected the contract, which, says Downs, "was a little disappointing." But the subway operating crew, where *Hell on Wheels* had its strongest following, voted 40 percent against the contract.

The group had organized rallies in 1986 during contract negotiations. "Negotiations were taking place in secret," says Tim Schermerhorn. "So it was one of the things that we tried to do to generate some momentum. They were not massive rallies."

"We also organized some solidarity activities with other workers, specifically some TWU locals. Our union supported the Eastern Air Lines strike, and we pulled together a day where we tried to get our supporters, Hell on Wheels people, out to a rally. We also had a couple of other meetings and forums."

Running for Office

Having worked for by-laws reform and on a pressure campaign to improve the contract, and on various rallies and demonstrations, the group now turned for the first time to local elections. "In 1988 we

decided to run in the local election, to challenge the president and as many of the top officers as we could, as well as run for executive board in several of the divisions," Downs explains. "We had no hope of winning the top offices, just some positions in the divisions. But we felt it was important that we give a higher visibility to the issues we were trying to raise and not allow the incumbents to walk in unopposed."

The Nubian Society, a fraternal organization of Black transit workers, had also opposed the contract that year, and several of its officers and some independents joined with the Hell on Wheels group to form the New Directions Slate. "We had a slate of seven people for the 10 top offices and we ran for executive board positions in three divisions," says Downs.

There were some offices, however, they did not run for. "Each division has what's called a division committee, which are essentially the chief stewards," Downs explains. "In my division there is not an effective shop stewards program. There are five people to represent 3,500 people. We chose not to run for the committee in my division, though we could have won, because we did not want to be in the position of administering a bad contract. Nobody else in the union hierarchy could be touched if people got pissed off."

"So we thought we would avoid those positions and continue to press for an elected shop steward system, and then we would look again at the possibility of running for those positions. There were differences over this. There were quite a few people who felt we should have run for those offices, but that was the position we arrived at."

Tim Schermerhorn was the New Directions candidate for president. He learned that "talking to people in small groups and ones and twos is a lot more important than going into a crew room and standing up on a table and giving a speech. Talking to individuals is a lot slower and a lot harder but it's a lot better way to talk about your overall perspective and how that ties in with their particular concerns. And secondly—and this was a surprise to some people—it's more important to run on the issues than to say 'we're better than those guys.'"

"We put forward the platform more than the individuals we had running, because people focus enough on individuals. Some of the popular points we talked about were elected shop stewards with power. We talked about elected staff representatives. We talked about local-wide meetings, which our union never has. We talked about childcare at union meetings. We had a position against binding arbitration. We talked about seeing the contract before you vote on it, which we've never done. We called for elected safety representatives with the power to shut down unsafe work. We called for a solidarity committee."

"The election pretty much did everything we wanted it to do," says Steve Downs. "It involved a number of people in a much more regular way with us, people were very active in campaigning. We produced 10,000 pieces of our main campaign flyer and got them out in every division of the local, and presented a fairly comprehensive challenge to the policies of the

leadership. Our candidate for president got 23 percent of the vote. In our division, rapid transit, the subway operating crews, all of our candidates won, which meant we got three seats on the executive board. And it was the first time an incumbent president had lost a division in probably over 40 years."

Organizing for the Convention

In 1989 there were convention delegate elections and again New Directions put forward candidates. "We ran on a similar platform to that we had used in the local elections," says Schermerhorn, "modified to deal with changing the rules inside the union itself. We called for an International strike fund."

"We ran slates of delegates in three divisions under the label of New Directions and then supported others who were running without that label," says Downs. "We did well. We swept the rapid transit division, we elected our entire slate, and we came just short of 50 percent in the conductors division. And in the subway maintenance facilities we got about thirty percent. We were quite pleased with the result there." In all New Directions sent 10 delegates to the TWU convention.



New Directions delegates to the 1989 TWU convention. Tim Schermerhorn is second from right in the top row and Steve Downs is second from right in the bottom row.

The group went on to win more victories. The train operators won the right to elect stewards. In January 1990 Naomi Allen won a special election for a seat on the overall local executive board. Her election was even more notable because her division is predominantly men. In July New Directions won a second local executive board seat, this time representing the conductors division.

"What we said," explains Allen, "and what we've been saying all along, is that it's possible to fight back instead of giving in to management, and that the union should reorganize itself in order to fight back and stop giving back the gains that we've won over fifty years. Most people don't feel that it's possible, they feel that the union leadership is so strong, and they as individuals are so weak, that they just have to

go along with whatever is proposed, whatever is done to them. And our attitude is, No, if we organize we can make a difference and we can change the way that management treats us.

"The important thing is just consistency over a long period of time, and demonstrating in action that this kind of work can be done, as well as making an example of yourself. You have to show that you're consistent in what you stand for, and that you're not going to lead the others into some kind of disaster. The newsletter has been very good, and people have come to trust it and trust the people associated with it."

Action Questions

Although winning power in your local is much more than a question of simply running for office, the following questions concentrate on the election process itself.

1. It is hard to think about power in the union without understanding the union's relationship to the employers. So begin by asking: What is the state of your company? Who runs things in the company? Who in management is in regular touch with your union? What is their relationship? Strict labor-management relations? Buddy-buddy? Corrupt? Company union? If it is a mob-dominated local, we strongly recommend outside help.

2. List all the offices and officers of your union. Do you know their salaries? (See Appendix B on Research.)

3. Are there members who do not hold office but who play an important political role in running the union? Are there International or district officials who play a role in your local? Retired officials? What about an out-of-office caucus or clique? Are there even politicians, mobsters or employers who play a role?

4. Have you sat down and talked to the important individuals and groups in your union (both the formal and the informal ones)? Do you really know what makes them tick? They are going to be your allies or your opponents if you try to take over the union. You had better understand them.

5. Take a large piece of paper and draw a flow-chart showing the power relations in the union. Put the most powerful figures in the center and draw lines showing how power, money, information, and other resources flow.

6. What are the most important issues on the minds of the union's members? Contract issues? Shop floor issues? Issues affecting the whole industry? Discrimination? Lack of union democracy? Do all the members care about the same things? What are the three most important issues? Write up these issues as if you were going to put out a leaflet to the membership about why you are running for office.

7. Have you talked to workers in all departments? Have you talked to both women and men? To workers of all racial and ethnic groups? Do you need to conduct a survey to find out what people think?

8. How does your union function? Do you have a copy of the International constitution and the local by-

laws? (See Appendix B.) When are union meetings held? How many members go to them? What happens at them? What important individuals, cliques or caucuses are at the meetings? Does the union publish a newspaper? Is it open to anyone?

9. What are the rules governing union elections? Who is eligible to run for office? What is the time frame for filing? What is the procedure for nomination? Do you need to get petition signatures or have seconds for nominations? (Besides your by-laws, get someone with previous experience in the union to help you.)

10. Is running for union office the best way to achieve your goals at this time? Would it be better to work in some other way, such as on a union committee? Or should you form a caucus to build a base and think about union elections in a year or two?

11. If you are going to run for office, should you form a slate (that is, a temporary grouping of allies running for office on a common ticket) or should you form a caucus (a formal grouping, like a political party in the union, committed not only to running candidates but to long-term political goals)?

12. How will you go about choosing candidates for office? Will individuals simply say they want to run for this or that office, or will the slate or caucus collectively decide who would make the best candidates? How will you make sure that your slate fairly represents both men and women, the different ethnic, language and racial groups, different departments and job classifications? Will you want to make an agreement with another slate or individual not to compete against each other for certain offices?

13. Make a list of ways in which you can raise money for your campaign. How much will you need? Who will be the fundraiser? Who will be the treasurer?

14. What personal sacrifices will have to be made? How much money will candidates and supporters donate? Will the candidates have to take vacation time or leaves of absence? Could people who declare for office be disciplined or fired? Has all of this been discussed with spouses and families? Should spouses be asked to become part of the core campaign group?

15. How will you publicize your campaign? Make up a list of media you want to contact. Do you have a union printer lined up? Do you also need a union mailing company? (Consult your by-laws, the union's election committee and your lawyer.)

16. Who will be the campaign manager?

17. Make up a tentative timeline for the period until the election, showing what you plan to do.

18. How can you ensure that the election will be honest? Is there an elections committee that your supporters can run for? Check your by-laws to become thoroughly knowledgeable about election procedures. Who will you recruit as observers?

19. What will be the first thing you will have to do when you take office? Are there negotiations to prepare for? Will you need to make new committee appointments? Is the local's financial house in order?

20. If this is your first run for office, it is likely

that you will lose. How will you prepare for losing? Will you want to appeal or to call in the Labor Department if you think the election is stolen? (If so you will want to contact them before the election.) Will you want to put out a leaflet announcing that your caucus will continue to work to strengthen the union?

Notes

1. TDU's long fight to reform the Teamsters is laid out in Dan La Botz, *Rank and File Rebellion: Teamsters for a Democratic Union*, Verso Press, New York, 1990.
2. *Ford Facts*, newspaper of UAW Local 600, February 16, 1952.
3. Legal Note: In addition to strictly following the time limits in your own constitution or by-laws, you must also follow those set by the Department of Labor if you are appealing there. You may appeal to the Labor Department three calendar months after you have registered your protest within the union. But you have only one month in which to do so. Say



Stewards Corner — October 1989

Running for Union Office: Your Legal Rights

by Susan Jennik

Your union election is scheduled for next year or the year after. If you plan on running for office, now's the time to begin planning your campaign and building an active support group.

Besides becoming experts on communicating with your co-workers, members of your group should become experts on union election procedures and the law regulating union elections. The law should be used as a guide and an aid, not as a substitute for the hard work of organizing. Courts, lawyers and government agencies cannot make a union democratic; only the members can do that.

A federal law, the Labor Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (also known as LMRDA or "Landrum-Griffin"), regulates internal union affairs, including officer elections. The LMRDA applies to unions representing private employees. The Civil Service Reform Act provides similar rights for members of federal employee unions. State and local government employee unions are not covered by the LMRDA unless the union also represents private employees. The Act requires elections of local union officers at least every three years and international officers at least every five years.

Election Rules

The rules regulating your union election are determined by your international constitution and local by-laws. You *must* have copies of these documents if you want to run for office. If your union will not supply you with a copy, you can obtain one from the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Labor Management Services, in your area for a small copying charge. [See Appendix B.]

The election may be conducted by an internal

your election was May 1. You believe there was hanky-panky and on May 2 you file a protest with the local. Whether or not your internal remedies have been exhausted, on or after August 2 you can go to the Labor Department. But you must do so before September 2.

If you do not go to the Department during this one-month window, you have a second chance after all your internal remedies have been exhausted at the highest level. Again, you have only one month to do so.

The Labor Department has the power to investigate the conduct of an election. It can decide whether federal law has been broken (for example, the use of union funds to favor one candidate) or whether the union has violated the procedures in its own constitution or by-laws. If so, the Department can ask the union to re-run the election. If the union refuses the Department can go to court to sue for a new election.

See Appendix E for legal rights and elections handbooks.

union committee, either elected or appointed, or it may be conducted by an outside agency such as the Honest Ballot Association or the American Arbitration Association. One successful rank and file group showed their strength before the election by winning a by-laws change to elect the election committee.

Elections may be conducted by mail ballot or in-person voting. Every method has advantages and disadvantages; your situation may favor one method over another. Mail ballots are useful in locals covering a large geographic area, or in situations in which the members may be too intimidated to vote in person. If an in-person vote is used, numerous and easily accessible locations are preferable.

Candidates must be allowed, upon request, to have observers at all steps of the election process—that includes the printing, preparation, and mailing of the ballots, as well as the counting. If paper ballots are used, there should be a strict accounting for all ballots printed. Specially watermarked paper can ensure against duplications. If machines are used, they should be checked before the vote begins to make sure that one vote for each candidate registers as only one vote for each candidate.

Eligibility Requirements

Your union constitution or by-laws will tell you the qualifications required to run for office, which you should know well in advance. Potential candidates should request written verification of their eligibility before the campaign begins. Rules which require candidates to have paid their dues on time every month for a specified period of time prior to the election are generally valid and have been consistently enforced. Other rules are invalid: the union cannot, for ex-

ample, require candidates to have held a lower office in order to run for higher office; the union cannot require candidates to be U.S. citizens.

Many unions require candidates to have attended a minimum number of union meetings in order to be eligible to run. The courts have never held a meeting attendance rule valid because generally more than 95% of the members would then not be able to run. Often when union officials are made aware of the court decisions, they will voluntarily suspend the rule. If not, a candidate held ineligible because of a meeting attendance rule has a strong election protest which should be made immediately both within the union and to the U.S. Department of Labor.

Campaigning

Federal law says neither your union nor your employer can retaliate against you for running for office or for campaigning for candidates. On the job, the National Labor Relations Act protects internal union activity in non-work areas during non-work time.

Employers may not contribute in any way to candidates for union office which, at least theoretically, includes granting access to the shop for campaigning to one candidate while denying it to others. Often incumbent officials gain access to the workplace under the pretense of handling grievances or other official union business. Careful records of the time spent campaigning will strengthen your protest.

The prohibition against use of employer resources applies to *all* employers, not only employers with which your union has a contract. Do not accept campaign contributions from *any* employer, including your Aunt Jane who hired two bartenders for her tavern, or your brother's donation of printing services from his print shop.

Union resources may not be used in a discriminatory manner for the benefit of one candidate. Resources include use of the copy machine, paper and other office supplies, staff time, telephones, newsletters or other publications and, of course, money. Some unions, such as the New York State United Teachers, provide space for all candidates to make a statement in the union newspaper. Union resources may be used only if provided equally to all candidates.

Because of these restrictions on campaign contributions, it is important to keep careful financial records. Some unions permit only members of that union to make campaign contributions; such restrictions may be lawful. A campaign treasurer should be assigned to carefully record income and expenses and keep documentation (copies of checks, receipts).

All candidates have a right to use the union mailing list to send their campaign literature to members. You should make a written request as soon as you are ready to do a mailing; if you have announced your candidacy, you do not have to wait until you are actually

nominated. If your request is denied, a federal judge can order the union to allow access to the mailing list.

The union may not censor your literature or even review your literature before the mailing. The union can charge reasonable costs for producing the list and doing the mailing. If you like, you can propose to supply volunteers to put the labels on the envelopes. In any case, you have the right to have observers present at all stages of the process, if you ask for it.

Voting and Ballot Counting

The secrecy of the ballot should be absolutely enforced, even over a voter's protest. If ten members openly mark their ballots for the incumbents, the member who insists on voting behind a curtain is suspect.

Candidates are entitled to a sufficient number of observers to oversee all stages of the balloting process. Observers should be trained so that they know when and how to make a protest, how to keep records, and what to look for. Do not ignore the obvious: make sure the ballot box is empty, or the voting machine registers zero, before the voting begins; make sure only eligible voters vote, and that they vote only once; make sure at least one of your observers is in the presence of the ballot box at all times.

After the Election

If you win, the hard part is just beginning. If you lose, determine quickly whether you want to file a protest. Some unions have time limits as short as 72 hours after the ballot count. You must first file your protest internally, following the procedure described in the constitution or by-laws. Your initial internal union protest must include all possible grounds for protest, but does not have to include the evidence supporting the protest. For example, you can allege that eligible voters did not receive ballots without naming, at this point, each person deprived of the right to vote.

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) has exclusive jurisdiction to hear election protests. The time limits are tricky: if the highest level of appeal within the union denies your protest, you must file with the DOL within the next 30 days. If you do not receive a decision from your union's highest body within three months, you must file with the DOL within the next month. The DOL will determine whether there were any violations *which may have affected the outcome* of the election. If so, the DOL should file an action in federal court asking that the election be set aside and that a rerun be conducted under the supervision of the DOL.

[Susan Jennik is an attorney and the executive director of the Association for Union Democracy (AUD), a civil liberties organization providing legal guidance and practical advice to union members. For more on the AUD and its publications see Appendix E.]

20. Locals To Learn From

As we noted at the beginning of this book, our unions are in trouble. In many locals, the members view "the union" as "the officers" and are not involved. The officers limit their concerns to the contract negotiations held every three years and to the grievances which percolate slowly through the procedure, occasionally bubbling over into arbitration.

In this sort of local, the union leadership does its best to avoid conflict, and prefers making a concession to having a confrontation. The union confines its activities to the workplace and takes little interest in the community, and so, not surprisingly, is virtually unknown there.

Matters are often worse if such a union includes immigrants. The officials find it troublesome to translate the constitution, by-laws and contracts or to provide interpreters for union meetings. From time to time one union official turns to another and bemoans the apathy of the membership.

In this chapter we will learn from three locals which are not this sort of local. They have carried out the tactics discussed in this book—not just one or two of them, but many of them. We have included their stories here because they have each pioneered so many superb tactics. Many of the lessons about boldness and unity which we have stressed throughout this book can be learned from the stories here.

Yale Workers Strike for Respect —And Get it

In the 1980s the labor movement won organizing drives at some large universities, including Yale and Harvard. These victories were especially important because it was women who carried out these drives, most of them clerical workers. The Yale campaign, which included a ten-week strike for a first contract, showed how the labor movement could reach

this growing sector of the workforce. As the president of the Yale local, Lucille Dickess, put it, "We were forced to be imaginative."¹

In November 1980 the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees launched an organizing drive among the 2,650 clerical and technical (C&T) workers at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut. These workers were secretaries and administrative assistants, telephone operators and computer programmers, athletic trainers and library cataloguers, laboratory researchers and animal technicians, nurses and psychiatric aides, and 200 other job titles. They were 82 percent female and 14 percent Black. They earned an average of \$13,424 a year at a time when the Bureau of Labor Statistics said it took \$16,402 to maintain a low standard of living for a family of four. In 1983 pensions for workers with 18 years at Yale were \$171 a month. Lucille Dickess estimates that about half the workforce were single heads of households with someone else to support.

Other unions had tried to organize the C&Ts during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. The success of the HERE campaign was due to an entirely different approach.

Lucille Dickess was probably typical of many of those involved. Dickess began working at Yale in 1968. "I and most of the people in the bargaining unit have virtually no labor background at all," she says. "I actually was on an anti-union committee quite early on, because I was under the mistaken notion that Yale, being Yale, would surely do whatever it was supposed to, that it was just a question of time before these things would be addressed.

"The other organizing drives had a very negative aspect to them—much to say about the problems on campus, but virtually nothing about any solutions. Also, the idea of having yet another boss, if you will, or another organization to be accountable to, was something that I was violently opposed to. I had authority at work, I had a husband at home, I certainly did not

need another outside third party telling me, 'here's what you have to do.' There was no encouragement for me to participate other than signing a card and they would take care of everything for me."

Support from the Blue Collar Workers at Yale

So what was different about the HERE campaign? First some background. There was another union on the Yale campus, HERE Local 35 representing mainly male maintenance and service workers. Yale had forced Local 35 out on strike in 1968, 1971, 1974 and 1977, each strike longer than the last. Local 35 was a strong unit, but it needed more power to deal with the university. The maintenance and service workers had a real interest in seeing their sisters in the C&T unit organized, and some of the C&T workers had approached Local 35 to ask for help.

The members of Local 35 twice voted to raise their dues to support the organizing drive. The International union committed \$2 million and later another \$1 million during the strike. Local 35 lent its staff person, John Wilhelm, to Local 34 as chief organizer. But what was different about the Yale organizing drive was the style and the message.

Dickess explains, "We were approached with the idea that: 'We will help you, but you will have to do it yourselves.' All of us said the same thing, 'Well, we don't know anything about unions.' But that was exactly the point, that all we had to know was that we all would decide what we wanted, what we would do, and how we would do it."

The HERE organizers encouraged the workers to forget any preconceptions about what a union could do, that Local 34 could be whatever they wanted it to be and tackle whatever issues they chose. For the first year no literature was issued, and for the first year and a half no efforts were made to get union cards signed. Instead the beginning organizers concentrated on "talking union"—one-on-one conversations at lunch and dinner and house parties, enlisting recruits one at a time until the workers had convinced themselves that they wanted to and could organize a union.

"If we were going to beat the University," said John Wilhelm, the architect of the strategy, "we had to have a gigantic organizing committee."² There were eventually 450 members on this committee, each one responsible for talking to designated other workers. "In a building with 100 C&Ts," says Dickess, "there might be 15 on the organizing committee, each responsible for 5 or so people." This structure was necessary because the Yale workforce was extremely fragmented, spread out in three campuses and 250 buildings. Many work groups consisted of only two to four people; the goal was to have an organizing committee member in each work group.

A steering committee of 150 members met once a week. Above the steering committee was the "rank and file staff" made up of 55 to 60 members who met more frequently. This organizing structure not only gave the union the troops it needed, it also was a way to integrate new activists into the drive and give them

whatever level of responsibility they wanted to accept.

Although wages and benefits were very poor and very unfair in their application, the organizing drive concentrated on the notion of respect. The organizers argued that low pay was only one indication of Yale's lack of respect for its women workers, and projected the union as the vehicle for gaining respect. Thus Yale's wage increase, granted near the beginning of the drive, did not deflect the focus of the campaign.

Organizing Is Pushing

Lucille Dickess explains what she did as one of the rank and file organizers. "You have to push people," she says, "push them past where they already are, so they reach a potential where they didn't think they could ever go. You would say to somebody, 'Do



you think you could set up a lunchtime meeting with Marie? She goes to lunch 12:30 to 1:00. Why don't we sit down and talk to her about how she's been here for a long time and how much money she's making compared to...' And the person would say, 'Oh, no. I don't know. I don't think she would go. I don't really know her that well. I don't think we should talk to her about money.'

"We had to get people to open up and communicate, because that was part of the university's policy. Talk about money? That was tacky, low rent. This is Yale, this is prestige. But for many people who were there, it was no longer dancing lessons for the kids, it was shoes.

"There are no short cuts. The only way to do it is by talking to people one by one. You have to account for every single person in every single department. And I'm not just talking numbers, but also people and what do they want." The organizing committee kept lists of each potential member, rated one to four on an anti/pro-union scale. "We talked to people for a long, long time before we began to sign them up," Dickess remembers. "Sixty-nine percent, I believe, was the percentage we were working for."

The university, of course, attempted to portray the union as outsiders interested only in collecting dues. Local 34 responded that it would not collect any

dues or initiation fees until the first contract had been negotiated and that the members could set their own initiation fees and dues schedule. In the fall of 1981 the union issued a leaflet called "Standing Together," signed by 450 members of the new union. And the union's first rally was attended by between five and six hundred workers.

Local 34 also anticipated that Yale would use captive audience meetings. The union held Saturday workshops for the 450-member organizing committee in which role-playing was used to prepare. The union argued that such coercive meetings would be counter to the university's stated commitment to freedom of expression. When Yale held lunchtime "Let's Talk" meetings, the union packed the meetings and challenged management.

In early 1983 the union submitted cards to the NLRB and called for an election. Yale attempted to stall until the end of the school year, when many employees would leave, by calling hundreds of witnesses to the NLRB hearings. The union responded by taking the issue to the university community, not only to workers but also to faculty and students, with a petition calling for the workers' "right to vote." The petition put the university on the defensive, and soon agreement was reached on a prompt election.

Now, with an election to be held in the near future, Yale's supervisors attempted to intimidate workers. In the medical area, in particular, supervisors accused union supporters of lack of concern for patients. "It was not an easy thing for the C&Ts simply to shrug off these remarks," write the authors of *On Strike for Respect*. They quote organizer Kim McLaughlin: "Women in our society are socially conditioned to try and please everybody."

The union staff [encouraged] the Organizing Committee members to give each other emotional support. Local 34 members were regularly reassured by their peers that participation in the union was perfectly consistent with their responsibility to their patients and their co-workers....

Local 34 activists frequently would go after a hostile boss by organizing a petition drive or holding a small demonstration in that supervisor's office.... A laboratory technician... was told by her supervisor that she was taking too many breaks. One morning... when she took her first break [her co-workers] all put signs around their necks saying "Joan Smith is on break."

The election was held on May 18, 1983, after two and a half years of organizing. The organizers predicted they would win by 100 to 200 votes. "When we counted the vote at night, it took four hours," remembers Dickess. "People likened it to childbirth. The votes were counted out loud, and as we walked—I couldn't bear to sit there the entire time—we heard 'Yes. Yes. No. No. Yes. Yes. No.' And it would go back and forth, the tension was tremendous. There was no announcement, John Wilhelm simply stood, put his head down and raised his hands up—and the place went wild." The crowd began to chant, "Union, Union, Union." With a 99 percent turnout, Local 34 had won the election by 39 votes.

"We realized that getting the vote was important," says Lucille Dickess, "but that was just the very beginning."

Fighting for a Contract

"We spent the entire summer doing our contract proposals," says Dickess. Hundreds of small group meetings were held to discuss ideas. A short survey then asked what people wanted in the contract. The answers were used to draw up a second questionnaire, in which people were asked to prioritize the demands. Over 2,000 workers responded. Union membership surged, and the organizing committee became the 500-member contract committee.

The proposals drawn up by this committee were presented to a mass meeting attended by over 1,100 C&Ts, which approved the proposals, adopted procedures for electing a negotiating committee, and authorized John Wilhelm to act as chief negotiator. The 35-member negotiating committee was elected later by secret ballot. It included people from all areas of the campus, including some who had not joined the union till after the election victory.

The union sought not only across-the-board wage increases but also "step increases," a common feature of academic pay schedules, providing for yearly increases within job classifications. The union also asked for "slotting," or moving each employee into the step she would have attained had the system been in place from the beginning. The steps would guarantee a regular advancement path, and the slotting would help to repair the past discrimination against women which had left many long-term workers with salaries of \$8,000 or \$9,000 a year.

Yale hired Seyfarth, Shaw, Fairweather and Geraldson, considered by the AFL-CIO to be among the worst anti-union law firms, to represent the university in negotiations. Local 34 responded by putting out a pamphlet describing the firm's long history of union busting. Local 34 also brought in Cesar Chavez, leader of the United Farm Workers, who had gone up against Seyfarth, Shaw himself, to speak on behalf of the union.

"Things went on like this," says Dickess, remembering the negotiations in early 1984, "no progress whatsoever. We began to think of innovative ways that we could deal with this. Some of them have been the most moving experiences that any of us have ever taken part in. One of them was a candlelight vigil in total silence in front of the Yale president's house. Now, there's much to be said for rallies, we love them, all the songs and balloons and everything. But there is a power in having thousands of people stand in total silence, in bitter cold, in the dark, concentrating on the authority figure on campus. I felt when we were standing there the concentration and the power, that if we all looked at the same brick, I bet it would just crumble. There was that intensity." Over 1,200 Local 34 members and supporters participated in that silent vigil.

The union offered to arbitrate, but Yale refused. In order to get the administration to settle or arbitrate, and to begin to organize their faculty and student supporters in the event of a strike, Local 34 began to circulate petitions on campus. Those circulat-



Two days after this rally, Yale workers voted in the union.

ing the petitions formed small ad hoc groups of union supporters.

Finally, the union set a strike deadline of March 28, and on March 6 issued a pamphlet explaining the reasons why and asking for the support of the Yale community. Local 35 announced that it would honor the picket lines of its sister Local 34.

On March 8, International Women's Day, Local 34's community supporters from Yale and New Haven held a rally in front of the administration building. Over 4,000 people turned out carrying signs and banners, and the speakers included representatives of both unions and women's organizations. The day before the strike deadline, women students held a vigil, carrying to the campus the symbols of the working women's movement: bread and roses.

Under the threat of a strike Yale began to move quickly, and the two sides reached agreement on health and safety, a grievance procedure, an agency shop, and promotions and transfers. The union postponed its strike deadline to April 4.

On April 4, it was clear that there was no hope of a good settlement on the economic issues. John Wilhelm proposed to the Local 34 negotiating team an unconventional solution: ask Yale for a "partial contract" that would include the language agreed upon up to that point, and leave the union free to strike later, if necessary, over economics. Summer, Wilhelm argued, was a bad time to strike a university. The negotiating committee accepted his plan, but now the membership had to be convinced.

"They were ready to strike," Dickess recalls the mass meeting on April 4. "They were hot. We came in and I'll never forget, ovation and cheers and everybody was ready to go." The cheers turned to

boos when the members heard the proposal. Some threw their union buttons at the negotiators. Finally, however, after a stormy three-hour meeting, the members voted 906-353 to go for a partial contract, so that "if we did strike," said Lucille Dickess, "we would not lose everything that we contracted for." In particular, Yale had heard such an outcry from anti-union faculty and workers over the agency shop agreement that union leaders feared the university would not agree to it if given a second chance.

Much bitterness remained, however, and the organizers had to spend much of the summer rebuilding members' trust in their leaders. In time, however, at least some leaders came to believe that the experience had been good for the union:

One of the strengths of Local 34...is that we went through the experience early on of the union being literally torn apart and everybody floundering in every direction and we had to go out there and literally pull the union back up by its bootstraps.

Lucille Dickess says that the membership learned that they could control the timing of events: "People were geared up to the point of striking, when they had never struck before, and then they stopped and discussed it: What is the wisest thing for us to do? They knew that they were the ones making the decision."

Pay Equity for Women and Blacks

The union now began to concentrate on the issue of pay equity. Local 34 called for a committee to study C&T salaries on the basis of sex and race; Yale rejected the proposal. The union did its own analysis and showed that women earned less than men, and Blacks less than whites, even when the women and the Black workers had worked at Yale longer. The union

designated May 23 as "59 Cent Day" (nationally, women earned only 59 cents for every dollar earned by men) and called a one-day strike over pay equity.

At graduation in late May, the procession of students and professors had to run a gauntlet of sign-carrying Local 34 members and their supporters; many graduates wore green ribbons in support of the C&Ts.

The union now came up with the tactic of making the negotiations more public. The union got over 100 faculty members to ask to be observers at the negotiations, a proposal the university immediately rejected. The union then invited the professors to join their bargaining team as observers.

"One particular session," says Dickess, "we hammered back and forth with the university on their hiring practices, because there were no criteria. They could completely overlook qualified people in the workplace and instead hire their old college roommate's son. A faculty member sitting on Yale's committee finally said, 'Well, we want to hire people that we're comfortable with.'"

"You have to ask, are you not comfortable with older people? Perhaps you're not comfortable with minority groups? So we called that 'the comfort theory,' and we starred that as very important to do away with." Several of the observing professors reported that the university was not bargaining in good faith, and this helped convince the broader Yale community that Yale was being unfair.

As school resumed in the fall of 1984, the union voted ten to one to strike on September 26 if all issues were not settled. On September 21 some 1,800 union members and supporters with balloons and signs and singing folk songs held a rally on campus. Civil rights leader Bayard Rustin, who had been awarded an honorary degree by Yale three months before, spoke on behalf of the union. The National Organization for Women (NOW) sent a speaker.

"Then we got down to organizing the people on campus to choose which side are you on," says Dickess. "This was uncomfortable for a lot of people. They wanted to continue to go about their business while this was going on. We forced meetings with chairmen of departments and with faculty and with students to tell them what was happening. We pointed out to them that they're at this university that has the audacity to hold itself up as made up of moral leaders producing the leaders of tomorrow—and the hypocrisy of what they were doing in their own university. So there were petitions signed by 2,000 students and 150 faculty." The union also got 13 state legislators to sign a public letter calling for binding arbitration.

On Strike

The strike began at 5:00 a.m. September 26 with 1,700 C&T workers, from secretaries and telephone operators to library assistants and autopsy technicians, walking picket lines at scores of locations around the campus.

The picket lines were honored by 95 percent of the members of Local 35. "In order to do that," says

Dickess, "they had to put aside any feelings that they might have had during all of the strikes in years past when we walked through their picket lines—but in their wisdom, in their solidarity, they knew that this had to be done, we had to come together. They were threatened by the university with legal action, and they supported us."

"In the meantime there was no cleaning, no cataloging, nothing was going on. The faculty were meeting classes off campus in pizza parlors, in theaters. Four hundred faculty were waiting for other places to hold their classes. Research was postponed. The *Wall Street Journal* described Yale as 'a crippled university.'"

Many labor commentators argued in the 1980s that the strike and the picket line were a thing of the past. They were mistaken. The authors of *On Strike for Respect* write:

The picket lines served as rallying points for strikers and their supporters. It was on the lines where many strikers learned the latest information from their picket captains, where money was raised, where strategies were debated, and where strikers' morale was bolstered. It was also on the lines that the moods of the strikers found their widest range of expression, from anger to celebration, nervousness, giddiness, weariness or frustration. There were also rallies and press conference, letters and phone calls, meetings and fund-raising events, informal gatherings of strikers and countless debates, large and small, but as the focus of the confrontation, the picket lines were the single most important mechanism in the strike.⁵

Lucille Dickess makes another important point about the picket lines. "If you have 82 percent women in your bargaining unit, that's what you've got out on your picket lines. Local 35 had a little trouble dealing with this. Their picket lines were men. They had a different style. They scratched their heads a bit about tag sales [rummage sales]. Or singing on the line. But when we finally were out on the street, the walls came tumbling down. We were free, there was a joy in what we were doing in taking this step against this outrageous corporation that no one else had taken on in such a way."

The union also issued a weekly strike bulletin for strikers and supporters.

Because the strike could not completely paralyze the university, "We had to go after their Achilles' heel," remembers Dickess, "their image." The Yale campus and the New Haven community became "a moral battleground" as the university and the union each struggled for the hearts and minds of the residents, students, and faculty members. Various pro-union groups formed, such as Students for a Negotiated Settlement and the Graduate and Professional Students Support Group, though there were also many students who strongly opposed the union. The student groups organized rallies, sit-ins, petition drives, picket lines around campus sports and cultural events, and a teach-in for the Yale community on the issue of the strike (organized jointly with pro-union faculty). Some faculty members moved their classes off campus, and some marched in picket lines outside President Bartlett Giamatti's office.

The union also organized a group of sympathetic

alumni, who circulated a petition calling upon Yale to settle and urging other alumni not to contribute to the Yale Alumni Fund, a significant source of funding for the university.

Local 34 reached out to other unions and to the New Haven community. The Connecticut AFL-CIO, New Haven Central Labor Council, Teamsters, and other unions gave financial and political support. The New Haven Board of Aldermen by a vote of 19-2 urged Yale to arbitrate.

The New Haven Black Ministerial Alliance and Board of Rabbis remained officially neutral but helped strikers with various problems, such as asking landlords to defer rent. There was national support from AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland and two NOW presidents, all of whom spoke at large rallies on the campus. Around the country other HERE locals picketed the activities of Yale executives and board members.

All of this strengthened the strikers not only materially but by giving them the sense of being involved in a historic movement. Their strike had the feeling of a cause larger than themselves.

Willing To Go to Jail

In October the union organized two massive civil disobedience protests. At the first, 192 union members, accompanied by a thousand strikers and supporters, were arrested in front of President Giamatti's house for obstructing traffic. At the second 434 people were arrested, including Bayard Rustin. Civil rights veteran the Rev. Ralph Abernathy spoke to the arrestees. Morale was at its peak.

The rallies and civil disobedience helped keep the strike before the public. All of the nation's major newspapers and magazines carried articles and photographs; the strike was a topic for Phil Donahue's viewers.

It was also necessary, however, to provide for the strikers' material needs. HERE gave \$50 a week picket pay. Locals 34 and 35 established a Resources Committee to help strikers deal with financial problems and negotiate with banks and other creditors. An independent Hardship Fund was established and run out of the Yale chaplain's office. Because it was independent rather than a union committee, it was easier to solicit funds from students and faculty on campus.

Again, the picket line itself was a source of support. "I remember one emergency, when a striker's little boy had broken his glasses, we took up a collection right on the line," says Dickess. "It created relationships that we'll never forget."

Local 34 had a fundraising committee made up of union members, faculty, students and community and labor groups. The union sold "59 Cent" buttons, "Bartbuster" t-shirts, and songbooks to raise funds. The graduate students organized a dance to raise money, while the Central Labor Union held a raffle. The committee estimated that all of these activities brought in about \$100,000 by the end of the strike.

Dealing with Scabs

One of the questions confronting any group of strikers is how to deal with scabs. The members of Local 34 decided to confront them and ask them to sign a statement saying they would turn over to charity any wage or benefit increases the union won. There were no takers, but it provided the strikers with a way to vent their anger and kept the scabs morally on the defensive. Strikers also called scabs on the phone at work. By the beginning of November only about 55 striking C&Ts had returned to work.

The struggle continued on the moral battlefield of the campus. The Connecticut Civil Liberties Union charged Yale with using pressure and discipline to restrict freedom of expression on campus. The union organized a "moratorium," a boycott of all Yale activities, for November 14-16, just before Thanksgiving break. Union members and supporters organized discussions of the moratorium in small groups throughout the campus. Secretaries and lab technicians were directly confronting professors, physicians and administrators and once again asking them, "Which side are you on?" There was wide support for the moratorium and some departments were completely shut down. The union used the moratorium period to hold marches and speakouts and to show films. The moratorium served to convince some professors that something had to be done to end the strike because it was not only bringing many activities to a halt, but was tearing the university apart.

"On November 12 we had gone back to the table," Lucille Dickess remembers. "There was very little movement and the holidays were approaching. We knew that over the holidays the university was going to be closed down. We knew that Local 35 was about to face their own contract negotiations in January, and would desperately be in need of money. We knew that people were becoming accustomed to seeing picket lines.

"Well, we had to stir it again with a stick. There were many people who had become comfortable outside. They had their own little niche. It had become a way of life for us too. So it was extremely important that we not get into any smoothness. This is a time of battle, and there's no room for apathy, there has to be action, constant action. So we decided that we would take the strike inside and cause as much trouble inside as we possibly could."

The union's new strategy was called "Home for the Holidays" or "Striking on the Inside." The C&Ts returned to work on December 4, although, as Louise Camera Benson, now local secretary-treasurer, notes, "Our productivity was not up to par." Again, when the novel strategy was first presented to the membership, many strikers rejected it, believing it would look like a defeat. There were two weeks of intense debate, followed by a vote of 800 to 250 to return to work. The understanding was that if both Local 34's and Local 35's contracts were not settled by January 19, they would strike again. The union also voted once again on Yale's final offer, rejecting it 952-79.

"No one went in alone," says Benson, "We all marched back in in groups." This time, because there had been a lengthy discussion, the local avoided the bitterness caused by the controversy over the partial contract. "Now to have the power to be able to do that," says Lucille Dickess, "to control what it is that happens to you, is something that gives people a feeling of strong self-esteem that perhaps they haven't had before."

Returning to work allowed the employees to recoup their economic situation before the holidays—and to get a five-day paid vacation between Christmas and New Year's. The union pushed the members to talk to the supervisors about the strike and the unsettled issues. Many supervisors and faculty members wanted to pretend that nothing had happened. So Local 34 members began wearing buttons reading, "Is it January 19th yet?" Some workers posted calendars and began counting off the days to January 19.

When Yale Corporation held a meeting on campus December 9, the union organized a rally of 1,000 union members and supporters, including delegations of clerical worker supporters from Harvard, Princeton, Columbia and Rutgers. Three days before the strike deadline they held another rally. Progress began to be made in the negotiations and the unions agreed to extend their deadline to January 26. Finally on January 19 the Local 34 negotiating committee reached a tentative agreement with the university, after fifteen months and 91 negotiating sessions. The contract was ratified the next week by an overwhelming majority.

The settlement included a 20.25% across-the-board pay increase over three years, retroactive to July 1, 1984. The slotting and steps were agreed to. The union won a dental plan, medical coverage for retirees, and improved pensions (including for *past* retirees). There was also improved job security.

After settling its own contract, Local 34 circulated a petition pledging C&Ts to honor Local 35 picket lines in the event of a strike. More than one thousand workers signed the petition. Local 34 also held a demonstration with placards reading, "You did it for us, Local 35, now we'll do it for you." On January 26, Yale settled with Local 35 without a strike.

Continuing the Fight

"We knew that achieving the contract was just one milestone," says Dickess. "Now we had to re-establish relations with the scabs. We had to train people as to what was in the contract. And we had to train the supervisors that there was now a power shift and they had to accept it."

When Local 34 returned to the table to negotiate its second contract it continued its fight for equality. "For the second contract we wrote our own job descriptions," says Dickess. "I would say they had probably not been touched since 1967. People got together in small groups and looked at their own jobs. We threw out their classification system. And when we negotiated this time it was with our brother union

Local 35. We sat at the negotiating table and negotiated both of our contracts at the same time. Can you imagine how the university hated that? And this time we achieved a contract without a strike."

In 1990 the local was setting up a training program for New Haven residents for entry-level jobs at Yale. New Haven is the seventh poorest city of its size in the country and a majority of its residents are Black or Latino, yet Yale pays almost no taxes to the city. A special union committee will oversee training of workers who would not otherwise stand much chance of getting a job at Yale, such as ADC recipients, and provide them with mentors. Yale has agreed to set aside a certain percentage of the entry-level jobs for this program.

★ ★ ★

The Yale organizing drive, contract campaign and strike were marked by innovative demands, bottom-up democracy, inventive tactics, broad outreach to supporters of all kinds, and mass involvement. The union's flexibility was particularly important—the leaders and members did not get trapped in traditional notions of how a strike is run and instead came up with their own agenda. Thus both the partial contract and the "strike on the inside"—which many at first thought were sell-outs—caught Yale off-guard. "We discussed *among ourselves*, What is the best thing for us to do at which time?" stresses Lucille Dickess. "We are in control. To have people understand that these decisions are theirs—this is the thing that makes so many of our members feel proud, that we can deal with the university on that level."

Finally, the strike caused the personal transformation of no small number of women workers who had previously thought of themselves as "invisible." Lucille Dickess tells of one older woman who had to do her picket duty in a lawn chair—but who came to the line every day. She said that striking Yale was the best thing she had ever done.

Louise Benson adds, "We beat Yale and had a good time doing it."

Paperworkers Overhaul Their Union

During the 1980s International Paper Company, the largest paper producer in the world, launched an offensive against the United Paperworkers International Union (UPIU). The attack culminated in a lock-out at IP's Mobile, Alabama mill when workers refused to accept concessions, and a strike by workers in De Pere, Wisconsin; Jay, Maine; and Lock Haven, Pennsylvania. During the 16-month strike the company brought in scabs, and 2,300 union workers lost their jobs.

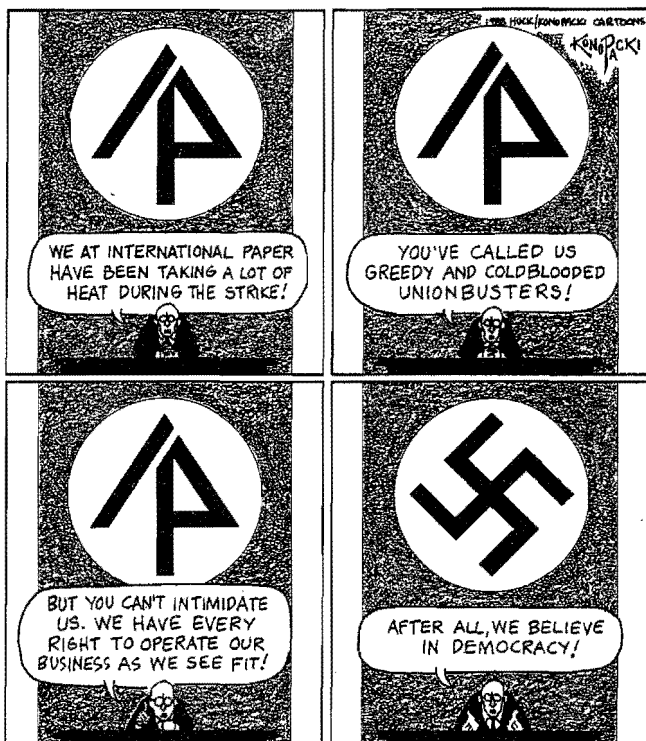
That devastating strike forced many paperworkers to rethink their situation. UPIU members in Kaukauna, Wisconsin overhauled their complacent local unions, turning them into a model of union solidarity and militancy. They also connected with other IP locals around the country, which at that time

bargained separately, with different expiration dates and little or no communication.

"Before," says Randy McSorley, area vice-president of UPIU Local 20, "we had what I would call a typical union leadership. We let the world go by. Nothing really bothered us. At the union meeting before our strike in 1986, there were eight people not counting the officers."

Uniting Divided Locals

The Thilmann mill of International Paper Co. is located on an island near Kaukauna, Wisconsin. The workers there were previously represented by two UPIU locals, Local 147 with 800 members and Local 20 with 300.



"The locals were divided by areas of the plant," explains Jon Geenen, now chairman of Local 20's bargaining committee. "One local represented people who worked on the paper machine, the other represented the people who worked on the converting equipment and in the maintenance department. In 1986 the company had managed to drive a wedge between the two locals. We didn't have our own local together, let alone try to sit down at the bargaining table with another local and recognize what their concerns were too."

After their one-month strike, which ended with the workers offering to return to work unconditionally, and then the disastrous strikes in De Pere, Jay and Lock Haven, the Thilmann workers decided they had to reorganize if they were going to survive. They began to discuss merger. During 1988 the two locals began to work more closely together. At a union meeting in July 1989, the votes were counted and announced to 600 cheering members: 97 percent of the

membership had voted in favor of merger.

Feeling they needed help in developing a strategy, the new Local 20 hired Ed Garvey, former executive director of the National Football League Players Association and a former Deputy Attorney General of Wisconsin, as its advisor.

A New Newsletter Fights Q1

The joint leadership now got down to the business of organizing. IP had introduced a cooperation program called "Q1" into the mill. Local 20's leaders decided that they had to educate the members about the dangers of Q1 and build a shop floor organization to resist it.

"We didn't have any formal experience on how to organize within the union," says Geenen. "But it became evident that the first step is an educational program, so the members understand what the issues are. We did that through a newsletter, which our local had never had before."

Randy McSorley is the editor of *Local 20 News*. "If something comes down at noon today," says McSorley, "by 1:00 everybody in the mill knows about it. We give a few people a call, usually stewards, and we give them stacks of paper right as our copy machine is going. We'll print about 1,400 of them, which is even more than our membership. We call it saturation communication."

"In our newsletter, we hit the controversial issues as quickly and directly as we can. We never hedge around, we never lie. If we're getting our asses kicked, we tell the people we're getting our asses kicked. And if we're having victories we tell them that we're having victories."

"People eat it up. People have a real sense of ownership in our newsletter, they take a lot of pride in it. When they're frustrated, it's a way for them to take a proxy kick in their boss's pants."

Local 20 News put out special issues to educate the members about Q1. "After several newsletters people really started understanding what was going on," says McSorley. "But at about that same time the company started holding mandatory Q1 meetings at separate locations where they'd give slide shows and the flipcharts and the whole works. So we came out with one more newsletter, and on the top it said 'Nothing Will Stop Q1.' And the text talked about: Yelling at the boss won't do it because they'll consider that communication. Trying to get along with them won't do it, because they're going to screw you. The one thing that will stop them is nothing. [See page 41 for a copy of this newsletter.]

"So hundreds and hundreds of people went to these meetings and sat there and did nothing. They would stare at the walls, they wouldn't give their names, they wouldn't stand up, they wouldn't eat their lunch. They just had a sit-in at these mandatory meetings—and it devastated the program, absolutely destroyed it."

The newsletter and the campaign against Q1 had laid the basis for further shop floor organizing.

Organizing on the Shop Floor

"The next step that we thought was logical," says Geenen, "was to show the company that we're out there organizing. We came up with this theme of wearing red shirts on Friday and blue shirts on Monday. We went out and specifically identified areas of strength and weakness in the union, it was a well-thought-out plan. We started in the department that appeared to have the most strength and unity, and we pumped the red shirts into those people first, and let those people serve as a model. And when the people walked through that one area, all of the guys stood there with their red shirts standing out like it's impossible to miss. And all of a sudden people asked, How can I get one of those?"

"Initially some of the people thought that it was kind of a silly gesture. But now we've come very close to having 100 percent of the 1,100 people in the plant wearing red shirts on the same day. The people themselves saw that it really made a statement to the company. And the company began to finally understand that we aren't just people that pay union dues, we're actually activist union members. Members started to really identify with the union, to say, I'm a part of the organization. Our shirts said 'Solidarity' on the front and on the back they said 'Win from within,' which has been the theme of our entire strategy against International Paper."

The next step of Local 20's internal organizing campaign came about because of management's stonewalling on grievances. "They made a mockery out of the entire process," says Geenen. "So a couple of the key people in the local got together and said, what can we do to settle grievances without going to the grievance table?"

Work-to-Rules

So the members began to take it upon themselves to resolve their grievances through work-to-rules. As Jon Geenen says, "It doesn't take a genius to figure out that when worker morale is low, production may be lower. A good worker is a happy worker, as the old saying goes. Supervisors find themselves in real trouble when the production manager makes the discovery that production in their department has fallen off between 20 and 60 percent. All at once it gives the company, and these supervisors in particular, real incentive to begin resolving grievances without even going through the procedure."

"Sometimes I wonder why we even have a grievance procedure. If we can handle the grievances on the spot with the supervisors we stand a lot better chance of getting them resolved. In this day and age with the Labor Relations Board like it is, and the difficulty of getting an impartial ruling from an arbitrator, you have to look toward different methods of getting your point across."

Production figures were excellent on blue-shirt Monday and somehow far from excellent on red-shirt Friday. The company attempted to single out in-

dividuals and punish them for low productivity. "The company initially targeted what they thought were the weak links," says Geenen. "They thought, we'll scare this guy into getting production up, then we can go for the rest of the guys."

The answer from the union stewards was, 'Hey, if you think you've got to reprimand him, fine, but we want the records of the entire department, and then you better give everybody a letter, or a day off or whatever the hell piece of discipline you're looking at giving.' And at that point it became impractical for the company to do it.

"The key to using in-plant strategy is economic pressure. The language that these people speak is dollars and cents. If their cash flow is interrupted, if it's costing them customers, then they start to get the message."

Taking on Sexual Harassment

Local 20 has also organized to deal with sexual harassment. About 70 of the workers in the plant are women. In September 1989 a woman was accosted by a supervisor who fondled her breast and then fondled himself in front of her. The union, which has strong sexual harassment language in its contract, filed a grievance.

When the grievance came up for discussion, the company said that the man needed counseling, and perhaps the woman did too. Lee Erikson of the Human Resources Department suggested the matter was not that serious. "Well," he said, "it's not like it was flesh to flesh contact."

The union's investigation revealed that the supervisors were running a "c— of the week (COW) club" which picked on a particular woman to harass. The supervisors were awarded stars on the basis of their ability to humiliate the woman. The scale included making her cry, making her cry and run to the restroom, and making her cry and leave the plant.

When the company stonewalled the sexual harassment grievance as it had others, the local sought to mobilize outside pressure. They informed other local unions and mobilized a group of women labor activists, including wives of the De Pere strikers, to picket the home of IP's manager of industrial relations.

Mobilizing the Community

The Thilmany mill is located on a 124-acre island which is reached by a bridge. The island is divided by Thilmany Road, the only public property and public access on the island. In 1988, in preparation for a possible strike, IP petitioned the city to vacate the road so the company would have complete control of the island.

"Initially the city said they would give the mill the road. The mayor was very outspokenly on International Paper's side," says Geenen. "So we started a petition drive. We told the people what was going on: the reason they want to do this is as a tool of intimidation for negotiations. We turned in several thousand signa-

tures to the mayor, and we asked that it be brought up at a hearing.

"The mayor said, 'Okay, you want a hearing, we'll have a hearing, but we've got to tell you, all eight aldermen in town are in favor of giving it to the mill. And even if only half of them were, I'm still the tie-breaker and I'm going to cast the ballot.'

"Well, we showed up at the city council meeting with several hundred people for a few meetings in a row, and very, very quickly the aldermen got the message: if you give them the road, you may as well kiss your position good-bye, because we are not going to elect you again. Elections were coming up and we were going to have an opportunity in a quick hurry to prove that." IP's request was defeated and the road remained public property.

At the same time a Local 20 member named Bob Lamers ran for the city council and was elected. "Bob Lamers represents the conscience of the labor movement in Kaukauna on all city council issues," says Geenen. "We've been able to take our solidarity and expand it beyond the local level now. Of course, being on the city council he's somewhat involved in negotiations for municipal employees. And Lamers is constantly pounding away at the fact that the salary people shouldn't get raises until they settle with the union people. And all of a sudden we're finding out that a lot of the labor municipal people—who have always had a little different idea of what unionism is—all of a sudden we're finding out they're on our side.

"They see we've got this guy from the Paperworkers down there pounding the mayor and pounding the rest of the council and giving them the message: you'd better treat labor fairly in this community, because we showed you once before what happens when you don't."

"We're working with the Progressive Forum of the Democratic Party," explains Randy McSorley. "It's a reform movement within the Democratic Party which was founded about a year ago. We try to make ourselves the conscience and the soul of the Democratic Party. We give them more hell than we give the Republicans."

Local 20 has been involved in other efforts to influence the community. "We've enlisted the aid of people to do leaflet campaigns around town," says

Geenen. "In the Metropolitan Fox Valley area we've distributed a pamphlet called 'Clear and Present Danger' about International Paper's callous attitude toward the environment. Those have been now distributed to every single house in Kaukauna, Little Shoot, Kimberly, Combined Lock, Appleton, Neena-Menasha—that's 120,000 homes that our members have visited going door to door. All of a sudden our members are getting the idea that we can make a difference, and we've really turned some people into activists."

Everybody Into the Pool

Just as important as reorganizing on the local level, Local 20 has joined with other IP mills in a united front to deal with the company. The local sent Jon Geenen to the UPIU's International Paper Council meeting in Memphis in 1989. That council decided to create what the Paperworkers call "the pool." The pool has two principles: resisting concessions and refusing to sign a contract until every pool member has a common expiration date. The locals voted 194 to 1 in favor of the pool.

"At the same time we were starting all the committees from the spouse committee to the community involvement program," explains Randy

McSorley, "we started the outreach program with other locals, going crazy faxing things back and forth.

"We've gone around the country to IP locals in Ticonderoga, New York, in Erie, Pennsylvania, in Bastrop, Louisiana, in Merrill, Wisconsin, and the message we're bringing them is, if you think you can fight IP by yourself—a multi-billion dollar company that made a billion dollars in profit last year—you better take another look at it.

"It seems to me that during the Reagan years, we completely ignored the fact that it does us no good to organize on the local level if we also aren't going to be organized nationally. And what we've got to do is start going to the table again as one voice. International Paper has uniform labor policy across the country, maybe it's time we thought along the same lines."

What is taking place at the Thilmany mill in Kaukauna and at other UPIU locals is the reconstruction of industrial unionism with a social conscience. The future of our unions is with organizations of workers like these.



Hotel Workers Demand Dignity for Immigrants

Over the last ten years HERE Local 26 has changed from a do-nothing union into one that puts the fear of God into Boston's luxury hotel owners. It does shop floor actions, militant contract campaigns, and strikes—actions that have won the members unique benefits and enthusiastic support from other unions and many communities.

Local 26 members have done these things despite the fact that many of them are recent immigrants, working in an industry where workers have traditionally been low-paid, silent and invisible. The 5,000-member Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees local includes 3,500 hotel workers, university employees at Harvard, Brandeis and MIT, and workers at area restaurants and the Suffolk Downs race track. They are Black, white, Latino and Asian, and many come from places like the Azores, Haiti and Viet Nam.

The Way It Used To Be

Before 1981 HERE Local 26 was an all-too-typical local union.

"It was a local that didn't do anything, just like a lot of unions," says Edmundo Aguero, a Cuban immigrant who worked as a hotel waiter and today is a business agent for the local. "Before, Local 26 was one of those unions that management would try to make sure that members are unionized so you can keep the wages and the benefits down."

But there were some activists within the union, and they decided to change things. Aguero worked with a fellow named Domenic Bozzotto. They began working together as busboys back in 1958 at the Kenmore Hotel, and later became waiters. They were what management calls troublemakers.

"When we worked together as waiters," says Aguero, "every time there was a problem in the room, management could not find the pewter plates. That was our way of telling them, we've got a problem and you've got to deal with it. So then they dealt with the problem, and then—magic!—the plates would be there again."

In 1981 Domenic Bozzotto, the ringleader of the troublemakers, was elected president of Local 26, promising to turn the union into a militant organization which would fight for better wages and benefits, but most of all for dignity for hotel workers. Through their union, the workers would have a voice in what went on where they worked.

The Chair—A Symbol of Respect

Secretary-Treasurer Paul Lanni sometimes tells the story of "the chair" to illustrate what this meant to the members.

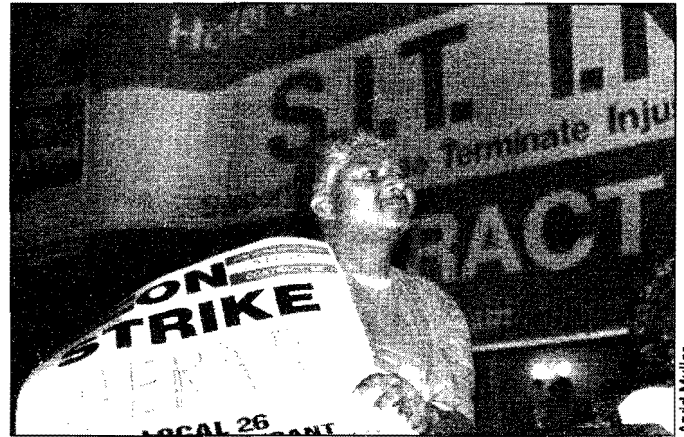
In 1982, shortly after Bozzotto was elected, the Sheraton Boston was being renovated; management

decided the bell captain's chair was unsightly and should be removed from the hotel lobby.

"The chair became a symbol," says Lanni. "The way they did it was the thing that upset us: *they didn't ask*. They had no respect for our input into the matter."

"I filed a grievance the morning that I found that the chair had disappeared. They said that they would not either accept or acknowledge a grievance regarding a piece of equipment that belonged to them. I insisted that they had no right. The contract was silent, but it was a past practice."

Lanni filed for an arbitration. "They were really upset," he remembers, "because the only thing that they do understand is money. Arbitrations run on the



average of four or five thousand dollars. The general manager said to me, 'A chair, we're going to arbitration over a chair?' And, I said, 'The chair, sir, has nothing to do with it. It's your attitude that has everything to do with it. That's what's going to cost you the money.'" Management finally conceded that they couldn't justify the expense of arbitration.

"They not only replaced it," says Lanni, "but they put a brand new bell captain's chair, and they replaced the wooden desk with a completely new hand-carved marble desk imported from Italy."

It happens that recently management thought again about removing the bell captain's chair. "But they did do one thing important," says Lanni. "They came to the union to make this request. It's a lot different attitude."

Class Action Grievances

The way Domenic Bozzotto looks at it, everything the union does is an opportunity to organize the members. "We have a philosophy," says Bozzotto, "that the overwhelming majority of people will go through their work life without ever filing a grievance because they don't get fired or disciplined; without going to the hospital so they don't use the medical plan. Most people go through their work life only seeing the union as someone who collects their dues, unless you actively make them get involved."

To get people involved, says Bozzotto, they use what they call "class action grievances." "When someone is terminated or disciplined or we have to file a

grievance over a shop rule," he explains, "we have everybody in that classification at the job site sign the grievance."

"There's three steps to our grievance procedure before arbitration. At each one of those steps we maximize the membership involvement so by the time we get to arbitration they frequently have to be held in a hotel ballroom because we might end up with a hundred people in the room. We organize around the grievances in order to show how important the contract is."

"By the time we get to arbitration we may have 60, 70, 100 workers in the room. Then when the general manager gets on the witness stand, it's our lawyer's job to rip his heart out."

"It's the lawyer's job to make the guy cry on the stand, to show that that manager is just as scared and just as vulnerable as the worker. So in a sense we use arbitrations to internally organize the membership. When management realizes that that's the tactic, they understand that arbitration is more than just the winning or losing."

"As a matter of fact we had the lawyer for Harvard in the middle of an arbitration actually take a fit. He started screaming, 'Look, these people do not care about winning or losing, they're here just to terrorize the management. They prostitute the system, they have no respect for authority.' The interesting thing is that he's correct. And it works well for us."

On Our Hands And Knees?

The way Local 26 uses group grievances to fight for respect is illustrated in a fight that took place a few years ago. Staff rep Barbara Rice told the story as she turned through a collection of grievance forms, newspaper clippings, and letters in the union scrapbook.

On November 10, 1987 a supervisor posted a notice for the housekeeping staff at the Copley Plaza Hotel:

Mops

There will be NO Mops used in the Rooms of this Hotel until further notice! Please help yourselves to as many clean rags as you like for HAND washing floors. Thank you.
R. Danigelas.

The union filed a group grievance on behalf of all room attendants, arguing that hand washing floors constituted "unhealthy, unsafe and dangerous working conditions."

The real issue, however, was dignity. As Barbara Rice says, "We have 20th century equipment, we have 20th century ways of working, and there's no respect for people and the work that they do if you're asking them to work on their hands and knees."

The story was leaked to the newspapers: one of Boston's most prestigious hotels was forcing its maids down on their hands and knees. On December 2 *The Boston Globe* ran a front-page story. Alan Tremain, head of the Hotels of Distinction corporation, then the owner of the Copley Plaza, was quoted as saying, "I don't see it as a hardship for the maids. A maid is a

maid, and that's just what they have to do."

Local 26's group grievance became national news. *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, *Time*, *Newsweek* and many other publications ran stories. "The hotel knows that 99 percent of these maids are minorities and most of them are older women," Bozzotto told the *Times*. "The scene of a white male sitting in his hotel room reading *The Wall Street Journal* while the Black maid is in the bathroom on her hands and knees—it's just preposterous."

The hotel was barraged with letters from church leaders, businesspeople, unions, women's groups and ordinary citizens who were incensed at the hotel's policy.

On December 4 newspapers around the country announced that the Copley would no longer require maids to scrub the bathroom floor on their hands and knees. Local 26 had won another grievance—and had hardly used the grievance procedure.

Steward Structure

"Our industry is 24 hours a day, seven days a week," says Bozzotto, "so there really is no convenient time or day for a general meeting." This makes the shop steward structure even more important than in other unions. "We let the workplaces determine what kind of steward structure they want. In hotels there are many, many classifications, and even though there may be 500 people working in the same hotel, sometimes you work there years and never come in contact with people outside of your classification. So we really encourage people to maximize the shop steward elections."

"We have regular shop stewards' meetings after each membership meeting so the shop stewards can get together on a union-wide basis. And then each job site has a chief job steward, and on a regular basis the chief shop steward gets together with the shop stewards from that job site."

Recognizing and Respecting Immigrants

Local 26 members come from places as distant and as different as Brazil and Viet Nam, Haiti and China. Immigrants are represented in the union's staff. Union literature and the newspaper are in several languages, as are contracts. Translation is provided at meetings.

The following case illustrates how Local 26 fights for respect for immigrants.

In September 1989 a union rep discovered that at the Copley Hotel one of the supervisors had been giving the staff of immigrant housekeepers "American" names. A housekeeper named Mirtelina Pleitez was called "Sue." Esperanza Villegas was renamed "Elsa." Sher Wah Chiu was christened "Sherry."

"You can bet that in the Copley's first-class dining room they have no difficulty calling the head waiter or the chef by their right name," said Bozzotto. "On the contrary, it's preferred. A difficult name there

gives off a European air of elegance. But in the back of the house, people are treated as this nameless, faceless workforce."

There was no language in the contract to form the basis of a grievance. But the union leaked the story to the press and it appeared in the *Boston Herald* with a large picture of one of the housekeepers holding a list of the "American" names.

At the same time the matter was brought to the attention of the Attorney General of Massachusetts. The Chief of the Civil Rights Division sent a letter to the Copley Plaza, pointing out that the practice might violate anti-discrimination laws.

The pressure worked. The hotel gave the workers new name tags with their correct names.

Local 26 Ballot

I vote to give the Negotiating Committee full authority to make all decisions at the negotiating table including strike authorization.

Yo voto para dar al Comité de Negociaciones completa autorización para hacer todas las decisiones en la mesa de negociaciones incluyendo autorización para ir a huelga.

Je vote donner au Comité de Négociations l'autorité compétente faire toutes les décisions à la table de négociations, incluant l'autorisation de grève.

Eu voto a dar à comissão de negociações plena autorização para fazer todas as decisões à mesa de negociação, incluindo autorização para chamar uma greve.

我在此投票决定同意或不同意
授权给予协调委员会全权决定
在协调会议上所决定的事项-
包括罢工决定的全权决定。

	Yes	No
Si	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Oui		
Sim		
	同意	不同意

Contract Campaigns Win Without Strikes

Local 26 begins preparing for each contract expiration well in advance. "We have it as a long, drawn-out process," says Bozzotto. "Our philosophy is that you prepare for the next contract the day after you sign the present contract.

"First we organize the membership to go into their church or their social organization, whether it's a bowling league or the Catholic Church or the Buddhist church. We try to tap into those organizations that get built in communities that have not been Americanized yet.

"We feel that the most important aspect of any strike is the involvement of the family, and the community, and the neighborhood that people live in. The union must have a presence in people's neighborhood and community, and their family must have a presence within the union. So we have what we call home meetings. Officers and business agents, organizers, people who get paid by the union, plus shop stewards, do home visits on a regular basis, talking to people about what a strike is going to be like.

"Since we're negotiating all the time, since we have so many shops, people are involved in each other's negotiations, not just their own negotiations, and are preparing for each other's potential strikes, not just their own.

"Large negotiating committees are very important. A union is no different than any other organization: people are always broken up into factions and groups and the only way to reach those groups is to make sure you have a large committee that represents every little aspect of the union.

"Our negotiating committee for the last hotel contract had 165 people, translated into 10 different languages. That committee reported back to what we call a contract committee of 500, and then that 500 reports to 3,500 hotel workers, and that's done through a phone tree which is constantly kept up. And we do that in all our negotiations whether it's a contract of five people or a contract of 3,500."

The hotels are not idle, however. Some begin to recruit strikebreakers. Says Bozzotto, "They fly scabs in and they live in the hotel, so they never have to cross a picket line.

"When they start to build up a list of people they think they can hire as permanent replacements, we make sure we've infiltrated those lists, so that they've got a lot of our community support people on there. They're not sure who the real scabs are and who the union scabs are."

The First Campaign

Bozzotto talks about the 1982 contract campaign conducted soon after the reformers took office. That year, he says, "We put together a travel agency out of this union hall with our own stationery. We started writing to travel agents all over the country, saying, Don't come to Boston, because there is going to be a strike, and these are the hotels that are going to be

Local 26 members can vote in five languages.

struck, and you shouldn't be sending anybody there now.

"The hotels start getting letters from travel agents in California and Hawaii and Florida saying, we're nervous about sending people to Boston, because we understand there is going to be a strike. So when the hotels start hearing that six, seven, eight months before the contract expiration, they realize they're in deep trouble."

Union leaders involved the membership through a series of contract meetings each of which involved hundred of workers in discussions of contract issues. These meetings were conducted in several languages. A large bargaining committee was selected representing all hotels, departments, and job classifications, and most of the major languages, races and ethnic groups.

The union also published a bulletin, "Contract Report '82." As the deadline approached the frequency of the bulletin was increased until it was being published every ten days.

The hotel workers also took their case to the community. Advertisements were placed in local newspapers, and union staff and members paid visits to organizations in the ethnic communities in which the members lived. When Local 26 appealed for support to other unions, community groups, tenant organizations, churches, peace groups, and socialist organizations, dozens responded. Each group was asked to take responsibility for picketing and tactical support at a particular hotel in the event of a strike.

The union indicated its readiness to strike by putting aside some \$55,000 from its own treasury, in addition to a \$1 million pledge from the International. The International also subsidized the hiring of additional organizers to prepare for a strike.

When the hotels began to threaten workers with reprisals, the union distributed the "Local 26 Guarantee," promising members that no contract would be signed until any workers fired because of the strike were returned to work.

The hotels opened a hiring center to recruit scabs, but the union put up massive picket lines. The hotels succeeded in signing up only about 100 potential replacement workers.

About ten days before contract expiration the union called a rally in the Arlington Street Church attended by some 1,500 workers and supporters. The rally was an emotional event with chants and songs in a hall filled with banners and balloons. The keynote speaker was Cesar Chavez, and several local political, religious, community and union leaders also spoke. A strike vote was taken, and the members voted 1,409 to 198 in favor of a strike if there was no contract by the expiration date.

An agreement was reached without a strike, however, and ratified with only 70 votes against.

The contract represented substantial financial improvements for the members, and the organizing they had done assured that the hotels would never be quite the same. The members who had been rallied around slogans of dignity and justice were not prepared to go back and put up with oppression.

Take the Strike Home

Three times now Local 26 has won improved hotel contracts without having to strike. Everyone knows that Local 26 means business.

In its campaigns (and strikes at other workplaces) the union has relied above all on two tactics. Says Bozzotto, "We never believed that people carrying picket signs at the job site somehow wins strikes. We understand that a strike is 24 hours a day seven days a week, and you've got to live with it, your family has got to live with it, and you've got to make sure that management lives with it—so we believe in civil disobedience and personalizing the strike."

When preparing for the hotel negotiations the union identified some 350 managers, owners and stockholders involved in making decisions about the hotels. "We identified the neighborhoods they lived in," says Bozzotto, "where they work, where they go to church, where they shop. So that when the strike comes we personalize the strike."

"We have some members who say, 'Well, I don't want to picket somebody's church. I don't want to picket somebody's kid in school. I don't want to go up to some first-class neighborhood where they've never seen Italians, let alone minorities. I don't want to do that kind of thing.'"

"We ask people only to participate to their level. We think we can expand their level, but we never give tasks to people that we know they're not comfortable with. So everybody doesn't do it, but more and more people do it every time we get into the fight because more and more people understand it."

The local's other main tactic has been civil disobedience. The leaders take pride in breaking the law when they do so for the union ideals. "I've been arrested many, many times," says Bozzotto, "and everybody on my executive board and many of the membership and the leadership have been arrested for many, many different acts of civil disobedience."

"You put four or five people on any given floor in a hotel who are not going to be taken out unless they're taken out by the police in a limp status, clearly you tie up the place. You tie up the elevators, you tie up the structure. People come to hotels for a good time. It's like yelling in church. So civil disobedience is a very, very good tactic."

"But we've used it in other places besides the hotels. In 1983 when we had a strike of 250 Harvard University cafeteria workers, we took over the Holyoke Center, which is the heart and brain of Harvard administration. We had civil disobedience at Suffolk Downs race track. We've had sit-ins and been arrested in banks, we've been arrested in insurance companies—that's who owns the hotels: banks and insurance companies—and we've been arrested in people's neighborhoods."

Winning New Language and a Unique Benefit

Local 26 has won some precedent-setting language in its contracts. The contract with the big hotels

has some of the strongest language on sexual harassment in any union agreement. For the story of how the local won that language, see Chapter 15, *Organizing Around Women's Issues*.

In 1988 Local 26 put a new issue on the bargaining table: housing. The cost of housing was out of sight in Boston; home ownership was essentially out of the question for the relatively low-paid hotel workers. The members saw affordable housing as the issue they needed help on most. The hotels were asked to contribute five cents per hour to a trust fund which would help workers buy houses.

The hotels, of course, opposed this demand and pointed out, quite correctly, that it was illegal under existing labor law. Nonetheless, using their usual creative contract campaign, the hotel workers won not only the housing fund but a 16 percent wage increase over three years besides. The ten major hotels would together contribute \$350,000 per year or a million dollars over three years.

The problem was that the arrangement was not legal and could not go into effect unless the union succeeded in amending the Taft-Hartley Act. And the AFL-CIO was reluctant to support legislation to amend Taft-Hartley, fearing that once the Act was opened conservative legislators would attempt to add anti-labor provisions.

Nevertheless Local 26 persisted, getting letters of support from city, state and national legislators, from churches, community groups and unions. In the Congress, Local 26 got both Democratic Senator Edward Kennedy and Republican Senator Orrin Hatch to push the bill. It was finally signed into law in April 1990.

Perhaps nothing illustrates so well the potential power of a local union as this campaign. Hotel

workers in one local union had succeeded in changing U.S. labor law and the entire scope of collective bargaining.

Taking the Fight to the Neighborhood

Local 26 sees community involvement as a two-way street. The union does not simply go to Boston's neighborhoods to ask for help on workplace issues; it helps organize people where they live around neighborhood issues. For example, in the fall of 1989 the union learned that a slumlord named Charles Smith went out of his way to rent to immigrants, taking advantage of the fact that many did not speak the language or know their rights.

"He created a slum property which is rat- and roach-infested," said Bozzotto. "He has got people paying their own heat. In some of the buildings he shut off the heat. He carries a gun when he collects the rent."

Local 26 organized the tenants into an association which carried out a rent strike. At the same time the union's legal service benefit was used to initiate a class action court case. When the judge threatened to fine Smith \$1,000 a day, the union suggested that instead he be forced to live in his own unheated and vermin-infested apartment. The court so ordered, and Smith was virtually under house arrest in his own slum.

The union also went to Smith's bank and asked it to foreclose on his mortgage. The bank gave him a 30-day notice that it would foreclose unless he improved the property. Local 26 proposed that the building be taken over by a not-for-profit community organization and made into livable housing.

It Makes a Difference

How is HERE Local 26 different than it was before 1981 when the slate of reformers was elected? "I'll tell you how," says Edmundo Aguero. "Representation. Because without representation there is no union. You cannot rally someone around any issue unless they trust that the union is going to be behind them whatever happens."

Aguero says one measure of improved union representation is the number of arbitrations the local undertakes. "I don't think there were more than eight or ten arbitrations from the founding of the union until 1981," says Aguero. "Since then, in six months we had 12 arbitrations at the Sheraton Boston. We've had over a hundred arbitrations." As described earlier, Local 26-style arbitrations are not the usual leave-it-to-the-lawyers affairs.

Today, says Aguero, the union has among the best wages and benefits for hotel workers. "I believe a maid was making about \$4.50 in 1981. At the end of



How the Housing Trust Fund Works

Under the law the Housing Trust Fund will be administered by six trustees, three from the union and three from the hotels. The trustees have hired the Union Neighborhood Assistance Corporation (UNAC) to administer the fund. The UNAC will provide counseling, referral, education, and financial services to help Local 26 members acquire affordable housing. The financial assistance will include down payment assistance, interest rate buydowns, cooperative share loans, upfront deposit for apartment rentals, and emergency rental assistance.

UNAC has hired twelve union members for part-time and full-time administrative jobs. "It's a way to develop new skills of people who are leaders in the hotels," says Bruce Marks, UNAC's executive director. "It's a way for hotel workers to move into better job opportunities." Like Local 26's organizers and leaders, the 12 new UNAC employees are from many racial and ethnic groups and speak many of the workers' languages, from Chinese to Portuguese.

this contract they will be making \$8.55—and this is at a time when most unions have been taking concessions.

“Before 1981 if you were pregnant and you went to the doctor, you had to pay in advance. Today—forget the housing plan we have, forget the legal plan, forget the disability plan, forget the dental, forget all the other benefits—we also have a Blue Cross-Blue Shield plan that pays 80 percent of the doctors and medicine and 100 percent of the hospitalization.”

To Janice Loux, vice-president and benefits officer, one of the best indicators of the union's effectiveness is the degree to which women are leaders.

“Our executive board is more than half women,” Loux points out. “There are four general officers; two of them are women. I’m a full-time officer, a role that carries power within the union.”

“Some of the strongest fighters that we’ve had in the strikes and the real confrontations have been women. I was arrested in the Greyhound strike. We took over an office over the apartheid issue, and I was arrested there. We’ve been arrested in the kitchens of the hotels, we’ve taken over banks, and usually better than 50 percent is women. We find that, following in the spirit of Mother Jones, women are as tough now as they were then.”

Organize the Union Like You Organize Your Life

Domenic Bozzotto offers another measure of the success of the union.

“The boss can always give you more money,” he points out, “but the one thing the union gives you that the boss can never give you is the ability to question authority.”

“I presume that the people who are going to read this are like ourselves, they’re working men and women. Nobody has ever given any of us anything. The reality is that in order to raise children you’ve got to fight every day to pay the bills. You’ve got to fight through the fevers and the colds and the appendix. And you’ve got to fight to pay the rent, and the car.”

“Nothing comes easy.”

“And to think that somehow to force management to give you money is going to be easy or there is some gentlemanly way to do that—you’ve got to

remind people that that’s not the real world. And when management does things like permanent replacements, cuts off your health insurance, threatens to change the structure of the job so that you lose some income—clearly management is using every tool possible, including what we call mental terrorism. That’s the strongest tool that management has, mental terrorism—to get you to feel inadequate about winning any kind of a fight.

“You’ve got to remind people that in their regular day-to-day life they use every tool they have in order to survive. Why would they change the rules when it comes to raising their standard of living?”

“We remind our membership of who they are. There is something unique to our membership, being ethnic, being minorities, being women. We remind our members that they had the courage to come to this country where they don’t know the language, they don’t know the culture, to come here in mid-life to start a brand new life.”

“Anybody who’s got the guts to do that, taking on the boss is a walk in the park. You’ve just got to figure out the strategy to take the boss on.”

“The same thing with minority America, for people who have constantly been harassed and segregated and hassled because of the color of their skin. Anybody who’s been able to go through that—man, taking on the boss is nothing. You’ve just got to organize that fight the same way that you organize your life.”

Notes

1. This section is based on the excellent book by Toni Gilpin, Gary Isaac, Dan Letwin and Jack McKivigan, *On Strike for Respect: The Clerical & Technical Workers' Strike at Yale University (1984-85)*, Chicago, Charles H. Kerr Publishing Co., 1988; on an interview with Lucille Dickess, president of HERE Local 34; and on a workshop given at the Labor Notes Workplace Strategies School, Detroit, June 17, 1990, by Louise Camera Benson, Secretary-Treasurer of HERE Local 34, and Lucille Dickess.
2. *On Strike for Respect*, p. 22.
3. *On Strike for Respect*, p. 30.
4. Andrea Ross, quoted in *On Strike for Respect*, p. 44.
5. *On Strike for Respect*, p. 52.

21. Strategic Planning for Unions

We hope this book has given you some great ideas and you're anxious to use them. But wait. The ideas in this book are mainly *tactics*; to make them work best, they have to be part of a well-thought-out, long-term *strategic plan*. You may find yourself turning to this book again and again for ideas. But first, you—that is, the collective you, the union as a whole—have to decide where it is you want to go and how you're going to get there. You need a plan.

Most local unions plan around their regular business: handling grievances, contract negotiations, strikes from time to time, regular union meetings, elections, conventions. These activities provide the regular rhythm of union life. Having too few resources to deal with them all properly, local union officials often find themselves overwhelmed with these day-to-day activities. They do not find the time to scan the horizon for internal or external developments which may change the entire context in which they are operating.

The same is true at the level of International unions. During the 1970s and 1980s many focused on their traditional activities while global changes took place which caught them entirely off guard.

The Power of a Bad Example

Example: the Teamsters. Between the mid-1970s and the mid-1980s the number of workers covered by the Teamsters' most important pattern contract, the National Master Freight Agreement, declined from 500,000 to 200,000. Some 300,000 workers slipped into sub-standard contracts or went non-union altogether. Total union membership declined from 1.9 to 1.6 million members. This debacle was not the result primarily of strikebreaking and union-busting of the usual sort (though there was some of that), but rather of government deregulation of the industry in 1980 combined with the depression of 1979-81. As a result many union firms went bankrupt while many

non-union firms grew rapidly. The union leadership—which had done little strategic planning—was unprepared to deal with this situation.

(Of course the Teamsters during these years had other problems, being dominated by the Mafia and held hostage by the Republican administrations. The regular rhythm of many of its officers' activities was investigation, indictment, trial, conviction, the slammer.)

Another example: the airline unions. Unlike the trucking industry, the airlines never had a single dominant union or a national master contract. The many unions, some AFL-CIO, some independent, did not coordinate bargaining or much of anything else. Instead, prior to deregulation in 1978, airline unions practiced what was called "leapfrogging." A strong union like the Air Line Pilots Association or the Machinists would win a wage increase and other unions would follow suit. Since there was little price competition among the airlines, they accepted the higher labor costs and passed them along through the government-regulated price-fixing mechanisms. The system seemed to be working fine for the unions, even without a strategic plan.

Deregulation changed all of that. Competition forced the employers to take labor costs into consideration. Divided by craft and employer, with no history of united action or even coordination, the many unions had no plan for drawing the line when one airline after another demanded concessions or even busted its unions. The result was a virtual rout of union power, falling real wages, and the decline of working conditions. In August 1990 the Machinists union proposed a master contract for their members and an alliance with the other airline unions; it was the first time that anything resembling a strategic plan had been proposed for airline workers. If such a plan had been put in motion a decade earlier, untold lost jobs and lost income might have been avoided.

We refer to the experiences of these International unions because they make the point about the im-

portance of strategic planning so well. Our concern in this book is the local union and the workplace, but there too internal or external changes can provide opportunities and threats. The point is that the union membership and leadership have to be prepared for them.

What Is Strategic Planning?

All too often unions simply react to management initiatives or seek only short-term tactical objectives. Strategic planning means analyzing your situation to develop long-range goals, and then working out the specific steps to get from here to there.

It is best to engage in a strategic planning discussion at a time when the union is not embroiled in a strike, an election or a convention, but rather at a moment when it is possible to sit down and think about more than the immediate needs of the situation. (However, the methods used in strategic planning can also be useful for specific situations such as organizing drives or strikes. The corporate campaigns described in Chapter 13 are examples of applying this type of thinking to specific situations.)

Strategic planning for unions is based on a "power analysis" or calculating the balance of forces. Such a calculation of the balance of forces must take into account the entire environment in which labor and management exist, as well as the relative



The Justice for Janitors national campaign included a rally at the World Bank in Washington, D.C.

Some Strategic Planning Examples

Many of the locals in this book sat down and analyzed their long-term goals before taking action. A few examples:

- Canadian Auto Workers Local 1967 (Chapter 5). This aerospace local realized that it couldn't fight management's "team concept" alone. In addition to educating its own stewards and members for local resistance at the bargaining table, the local also worked within the national union for a union-wide policy against team concept. Once this policy was adopted, it would be harder for management to "whipsaw" and undercut Local 1967's position.

- The unions at Boston City Hospital (Chapter 7). These three unions formed a coalition among themselves and with community organizations concerned with keeping the hospital from shrinking. They do not just ask community groups for help when the hospital workers themselves face a problem. Instead they plan ahead for their need for allies—they go to the community organizations to find out how *they* need assistance, creating goodwill for the future and an ongoing relationship.

- The local unions at Miller Brewing (Chapter 6). Miller management nationally seemed to have a strategic plan of pitting plant against plant. So locals from four different Internationals meet several times a year to exchange information about management strategies and prevent whipsawing. Now local officers actually sit in on each other's negotiations.

- The Hell on Wheels caucus in TWU Local 100 (Chapter 19). This caucus in a huge, spread-out local started out modestly with a newsletter and gradually added activities in which more people could be involved, such as a by-laws campaign and eventually campaigns for union office. It decided not to run for chief steward positions where its candidates, if they won, would be powerless to do their jobs well—and probably voted out of office in the next round. Instead caucus members campaigned to change the system, to require the election of grassroots stewards to work with the chief stewards.

- The SEIU Justice for Janitors campaign in Los Angeles (Chapter 18). Union organizers assessed changes in both the industry and the workforce. New forms of management of office buildings meant a several-pronged pressure campaign was necessary to get union recognition. And a workforce made up almost wholly of Latin immigrants meant hiring Spanish-speaking organizers and appreciating the workers' legal status. The Los Angeles campaign is part of a nationwide Justice for Janitors drive—the SEIU's strategic plan for regaining strength in the building service industry which at one time was its stronghold.

strengths and weaknesses of the union and the company themselves. Such a power analysis must look not only at the situation of the moment, but especially at the changes taking place—the dynamics which are driving the society, the industry, the company, the union and the rank and file in various directions.

Let's say that your local is ready to set up a strategic planning session. There are certain important ingredients besides information and intelligence. These include:

The planners themselves. Think broadly about who should be in on your local's strategic planning sessions. You want elected officials, but there may be others who can contribute as much or more. There are many natural leaders and intelligent members who never run for union office. In addition, you need to have everyone who will be involved in implementing the plan on board from the beginning—those left out of the planning process will be less interested in carrying out the resulting strategy.

Think in terms of constituencies represented and different political followings. And also invite people with a range of skills—financial, creative, detail work, writing, big picture thinking, dealing with management. Even those who are not activists can be brought in through department meetings and questionnaires.

Go off-site. This is for two reasons. You need to be away from the day-to-day tasks which keep your nose to the grindstone and keep you from thinking long term. And you need to get across to the participants the idea that this meeting is something different, a chance to change old habits of thinking.

Use the brainstorming method. (See the box.)

Use some of management's tools. A flipchart and a felt-tip marker to record everyone's ideas as you brainstorm will make a big difference from the usual free-for-all discussion. It will also help to keep traditional leaders from dominating—or others from deferring to them.

For space reasons we have presented the questions in this chapter in a condensed form. We recommend that you retype them with lots of blank space for writing in answers. For some reason a piece of paper with some white space on it seems to get many

people's creative juices flowing. You'll want a page for a Mission Statement, for Key Goals, for a Strategic Analysis, and several for the Strategic Plan itself, including a timeline (see the guides in Appendix D).

Consider using an outside facilitator. A neutral person experienced at drawing others out and moving the discussion along can help a lot. Perhaps someone you've met from another union in town would give you a hand.

There are essentially six steps to strategic planning:

- Agree on a mission statement.
- Pinpoint your key goals for the coming period (say a year).
- Analyze the balance of forces.
- Make a detailed plan for achieving your key goals.
- Carry out the plan.
- Evaluate how well the plan is working; make changes if necessary.

Write a Mission Statement

A mission statement is a clear statement of the purpose of the union. Why does the union exist? What does the union want to accomplish in the broadest sense? That is its mission. If this has not been discussed in your union for some time—in some unions it has not been discussed since the union was founded in the 1890s or the 1930s—then it may be worth some debate.

In Chapter 17, Cecilia Rodriguez of La Mujer Obrera, a non-union organization for Latina workers in El Paso, Texas, addressed the question of her group's mission. "What are we struggling for?" asks Rodriguez. "Are we struggling to just better the working conditions in the sweatshops or are we struggling to have a different, more just society? If you say, we're struggling to have a different, more just society, then that means you've got to go outside the factory, and you've got to look at your tactics and your strategy in a broader way."

You may decide that your local union's mission is limited to bettering the conditions in your particular sweatshop. But in any case the strategic planning group—and the membership as a whole—needs to agree on why they're all in this organization anyway.

Decide on Key Goals

Key goals are "got-to-haves," those two or three elements that will distinguish success from failure for your union in the coming period.

For example: a union of electrical manufacturing workers is facing a trend toward the opening of non-union plants in the area, leading to a depression in wages. So it might decide that organizing those plants is its most important key goal.

At the same time, the local leaders are aware that

Rules for Brainstorming

1. Clarify and agree on the issue for discussion.
2. Allow a minute of silence for people to think individually.
3. Be sure everyone has a chance to speak by going around the table to each person in turn. Take one idea at a time.
4. People may pass.
5. People may build on previous ideas.
6. Do not discuss or criticize ideas until they are all recorded.
7. People may add new ideas once discussion starts.
8. Encourage the widest range of ideas possible: far out is good.

its older U.S.-born workers are rapidly retiring, while for the last two years the employer has hired only Latinos and Asians, the fastest growing immigrant groups in the area. The planners might decide that strengthening the involvement of the Latin and Asian workers—who represent the future of the union—is another key goal.

Another local union, this one in a multi-plant company, might determine that the greatest threat to the local is the employer's attempts to "whipsaw" it against a sister plant in another state—trying to get each to underbid the other for new work. This union might decide that building strong ties to the sister local and making a pledge to resist concessions together is a key goal.

The Role of History in Strategic Planning

A good place to begin thinking about the future of your union and industry and region is by examining its past. The key to your local union's strategic direction may lie in trends and traditions on which you can build.

An example is the experience of Black Workers for Justice (BWFJ) in North Carolina (see Chapter 17). With only six percent of the North Carolina workforce organized, most unions not very interested in launching any new organizing campaigns, and local political machines dominated by big corporations, the idea of doing any union organizing in North Carolina might have seemed hopeless.

But what were the history lessons? What had happened in previous union campaigns? Unions would send in organizers, conduct drives, and, having failed, would leave.

There was a lesson to be drawn from that experience: namely, that organizing could not be a fly-by-night operation. Union drives would have to be based on a long-term commitment by activists with local roots.

If there were not many strong unions in North Carolina, there were some other organizations which had survived. There were churches and civic organizations and some civil rights organizations. These were traditions that organizers could build on. The BWFJ strategic plan thus builds on the model of community organizations as much as on a union model.

Another example, from the Teamsters (the union this author knows best): it was hard to organize inside the Teamsters union in the 1970s. The experience of the Jimmy Hoffa and Frank Fitzsimmons years had left many local activists demoralized. But there were some traditions of rank and file activism among freight drivers, steel-haulers and carhaulers.

When the founders of TDU began working for union reform in the early 1970's, they read the history of the union, talked to the old-timers, looked up the local union activists, and learned the

Make an Analysis

To make a strategic analysis you must assess the external and the internal, the environment and the union. This is sometimes called a SWOT Analysis, for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. See the charts in Appendix D.

Analyzing the Environment

In looking at the environment, you look not only at the current situation. You ask, what developments are taking place, and, even more important, what are the *trends*?

You may feel that you, as a group, are already

history of dissent and protest in the union. They built TDU in part on the basis of existing traditions in the union.

At the same time TDU discovered in comparing local contracts that freight drivers' wages and working conditions were on a downward trend. The history of prior organization in the freight sec-



Members of Teamsters for a Democratic Union march during contract negotiations in 1979.

tor, combined with evidence of new problems, made it logical for TDU to concentrate its initial organizing efforts there. Over the years as TDU became stronger, it was then able to expand and support reform efforts among other Teamsters as well, including cannery workers, brewery workers and airlines workers.

You may be surprised to find that in big city or university libraries there are books and articles that deal in some detail not only with your industry and union, but perhaps even with your local. The local newspaper may have run articles over the years which point to trends in the industry or the union. Librarians can be very helpful in finding these materials.

Not everyone in your local will want to do this sort of research, but those who enjoy it may do the investigation and then report back to the others.

very familiar with these facts and trends. But write down your answers and compare them. Discuss them. Add more questions to those here.

Economic Questions: What is the state of the industry? Of the company? Of your local workplace? Is the industry booming? Or is it on the way down? Is the company profitable? Is your workplace important for the company, or is it marginal? Is it profitable? Who are the company's owners? Any changes there? What about its managers? What is the company's market share? Who are its customers? Its suppliers? Is the company maintaining the facility, the equipment? How is new technology affecting your workplace? Is your employer keeping up with the pace of developments in the industry?

What is your company's overall corporate strategy for survival and growth? Within that, what is its strategy toward unions? What is the strategy of local management at your workplace?

How are global economic changes affecting your workplace? (See Chapter 1 for some examples of these changes.)

Social Questions: Is the workplace in an industrial, commercial or residential area? What are things like in the surrounding neighborhood? Are there important community institutions such as churches? Neighborhood organizations? Block clubs? What are race relations like in the area? What is the unemployment situation? What is the community's attitude toward the company? Toward the union? List all the union's current and potential allies and highlight the most important ones.

Political Questions: What is the political situation in the city relevant to the labor movement? Are the mayor and city council pro-union or anti-union? What about the police chief? What are their ties to this company and this workplace? What are their ties to this neighborhood?

How are political trends in the country affecting your industry or your members? What judicial or legislative decisions are affecting you?

Analyzing the Union

In analyzing your own organization, whether a local union or a rank and file group, you have to look realistically at your own strengths and weaknesses. Again, you will want to look at the *trends*. Add more questions to those here.

- What are the basic statistics of your organization? How many members do you have and what proportion of the total workforce does that represent? What is the demographic make-up of the workforce: Male? Female? White? Black? Latin? Asian? Immigrant? Documented? Undocumented? What is the age make-up of the workforce? How many are retiring and when? At what rate is the company hiring? How is the workforce organized and deployed into crafts, job titles, grades or other distinctions? In what direction are all these statistics changing?

- Take an inventory of your financial resources: Union treasury? Strike benefits? Credit?

- How broad is the leadership of the organization? Does the entire executive board play a leadership role? What about the paid staff? Are all the stewards active? Do you have rank and filers who are active in the union? How many people come to union meetings? Department meetings? Are there other ways to measure membership commitment and participation? Are the official leaders of the union also the actual leaders? Are there potential leaders who have not yet been incorporated?

- How active is the rank and file? How many participated in the last strike? How many participated in the union's last major activity? How many voted in the last union election? How many calls are there to the office each week? How many visits by stewards with members, by business agents with stewards and members?

- Are there good or bad relations among the union's members? Is there any ill will among various groups (racial, sexual, craft or other)? Are there any historic problems that need to be dealt with? For example, "X group scabbed on the last strike," or "Y group got a bigger raise than Z group." Are there strong differences of opinion in the union? Over what issues? What is the state of democracy in the union? Do all groups get a chance to make their feelings known? Is the leadership tolerant of dissent?

You may want to review your key goals and revise them in the light of your Strategic Analysis.

Look at the Big Picture

In doing the analysis above you will do best if you locate both the union and the employer in their larger setting.

For example, instead of seeing the shop as having 300 members or the local union as having 800 members who are arrayed against an employer which is a local company, those "facts" should be placed in their proper context. The 300 members at the shop have an average family size of four members, so we are talking about 1,200 people associated with the union and living in the community who are concerned about this shop directly. The union's 800 members represent 3,200 people in the community who have ties to this shop indirectly through the local union.

The union also has actual or potential connections to churches and neighborhood groups, to other unions in the Central Labor Council and to other locals in its International. Placed in their context, the facts take on a new meaning: those 300 workers in the shop represent the possibility of mobilizing thousands of allies.

The union's potential allies are only one part of the context, of course. Equally important is the context for your local management's moves—the situation in the industry, global competition. These are not as easy for a local union to affect, but they must be taken into account.

Here's an example of a union which looked at the big picture and made a strategic plan accordingly.

For a decade or more, the United Mine Workers

saw their power in the bituminous coal industry decline as more production moved west to non-union open pit mines. Furthermore, the employers themselves had gotten bigger as energy conglomerates bought up the old coal companies. Encouraged by these trends, employers began leaving the industry's collective bargaining arm, the Bituminous Coal Operation Association, and breaking with the pattern contract. Long industry-wide strikes in 1978 and 1981 had not stopped this trend and had cost the union dearly. The union was in danger of extinction.

In the early 1980s the union decided it was in need of a new strategy to stem the tide. The strategy included a proposed merger with the Oil, Chemical



Pittston coal miners' wives and a striking Eastern Airlines flight attendant welcome Detroit auto workers to the miners' Camp Solidarity in the mountains of southwestern Virginia.

and Atomic Workers, which bargained with many of the same energy conglomerates and could bring greater combined resources. The UMWA also developed a new approach to strikes. First, the union would strike only companies that tried to break away from the national contract. Second, the strike itself would no longer be a simple withdrawal of labor. It would become a mass movement.

The new approach was first applied in 1984 when A.T. Massey tried to break with the pattern agreement. The union conducted a world-wide corporate campaign against Royal Dutch Shell, which was a major owner of Massey, emphasizing Shell's role in South Africa. The union also used mass non-violent civil disobedience tactics. The new tactics were only partially successful in getting Massey to conform to the master contract, but the mine workers had learned much about changing the balance of forces.

In 1988 1,700 coal miners in Virginia were faced with similar union-busting by the Pittston Coal Group, a large multinational conglomerate (see Chapter 11). The odds looked uneven. In line with their plan, the miners knew 1) that keeping Pittston in line was key to preserving the union and 2) that they would need a strike based on a grassroots movement. Again the union looked at the larger context: the miners' family

members, laid-off and disabled miners, retirees, friends in the community, other unions, potential support from other cities and states.

When the confrontation came in April 1989, Pittston faced not only 1,700 strikers but a totally mobilized community in southwestern Virginia and an even more impressive series of mass actions than Massey had faced. High school students struck in sympathy. Women, organized as the Daughters of Mother Jones, sat in at the company's regional offices. Tens of thousands of miners and supporters from dozens of unions across the country came to "Camp Solidarity" in Virginia and participated in rallies and mass civil disobedience. The community came to see the union's cause as its own.

To most observers assessing the situation in 1980, it would have seemed impossible that the UMWA—a shrinking union in a changing industry—could survive so well for so long. And the UMWA has not stopped the coal operators' union-busting plans once and for all. But for now, its strategy is working.

Make A Strategic Plan

It is crucial that the union's leadership broadly speaking (executive board, stewards, union activists, staff) be involved in developing the Strategic Plan, and that the rank and file be kept informed and periodically participate in helping to evolve it. If not, the union leadership may find itself having to "sell" a program for which it has failed to organize support as it went along.

While your key goals are somewhat general, Strategic Plans are very specific. Within the Plan, the objectives should be "SMART":

- Specific—specifies a key result to be accomplished
- Measurable—so you can know whether you've succeeded or not
- Assignable—specifies who will do it
- Realistic—but still represents a change and a challenge
- Time-related—specifies the amount of time needed or a deadline.

Let's create a hypothetical example. The leadership of a local union, a garment workers local made up mostly of women, decides that a key goal is strengthening the involvement of its growing numbers of Asian and Latin members. It decides that some measures of progress toward this goal are:

- higher attendance of Asian and Latin members at union meetings
- involvement of Asian and Latin members on union committees
- greater number of grievances written by Asian and Latin members
- Asian and Latin candidates for union office.

The Strategic Plan must be made up of specific tasks. For example:

- A) Print contracts, union by-laws and constitution in Spanish and Korean.

B) Arrange for translators for union meetings and department meetings.

C) Place articles by and about Asian and Latin workers in union newsletter.

D) Appoint two Asian and two Latin workers to fill vacant steward positions until next election. This will give them experience and make them viable candidates.

E) Appoint Asian or Latin worker to fill vacancy on local executive board.

F) Hire new woman organizer who is Asian or Latin.

G) Union officers visit Asian and Latin community organizations and churches in the area.

Tasks must always be attached to times. A plan must have a time frame in which to accomplish its goals. Let's say the time frame is one year. Within that time frame there must be a timetable—things to be done each month, week, and perhaps even day.

The filling of the vacancies can be done at once, the translation and reprinting within three months. The articles in the newsletter can begin with the next issue in one month.

Tasks must also be attached to individuals (perhaps committees) responsible for carrying them out. The local president will make the appointments to the executive board and the steward positions. The secretary-treasurer will see to arranging the translation and printing. The newsletter editor will see to getting letters by and about Korean and Salvadoran workers. A temporary search committee will be appointed to find the new organizer, and the executive board will approve her hiring. A new Outreach Committee will be recruited to visit the local community groups and report back on potential allies.

Strategic Plans have to be realistic. For example, if the local of electrical workers mentioned earlier under Key Goals has few members and a small treasury, and the electrical industry in the area involves scores of plants, then it may not be possible for that local alone to set itself the task of organizing the industry in the area. A more reasonable plan might be to convince other electrical workers' unions to join together to organize the non-union plants.

Evaluate and Be Flexible

In our garment workers example, the executive board might want to evaluate the process in three months. How have the Asian and Latin workers

reacted to the changes so far? Is attendance at union meetings higher, for example? How are the non-immigrant workers responding to the union's new initiatives?

The plan must be flexible. Perhaps there was an unforeseen layoff and a fall in dues income immediately after the plan was adopted, making it impossible to hire the new organizer. How will you compensate? Is it possible to set up a volunteer organizing committee?

Or it may turn out that production expanded rapidly and management began to hire more immigrants, this time from Haiti. It will be necessary to rethink the plan and come up with new tasks, specific individuals to carry them out, and a new time frame and timetable.

See the Strategic Planning Guide in Appendix D.

Initiative from Below

In this chapter we have directed ourselves mainly to union officers. But it may be the union's rank and file members who first come up with the elements of a Strategic Plan.

It may be the member who stands up at a union meeting and says, "You know, the company seems to be contracting out more of the components used in our department. They get them from that outfit on the highway just outside of town. Maybe we ought to get those people in the union and get them a good contract, so they are not undercutting us."

An intelligent union leadership will be able to incorporate the information, insights, and ideas of the rank and file. But it sometimes happens that a local union leadership is too caught up in day-to-day activities, or too closely tied to management, or simply too concerned about defending its own position, to accept initiatives from the ranks.

In situations where the union officials do not want the advice or opinion of the rank and file, the ranks may have to make their own strategic decisions, and the first one may be to get rid of the leadership. Sometimes it is only possible to go forward by removing a leadership which has itself become an obstacle to progress.

If that is the case, then an opposition caucus will need to be formed which can develop its own Strategic Plan for the future of the union. See Chapter 19 for some examples of caucuses that have operated on that basis.

Beyond the Workplace 22.

If the experiences you've read about have helped you and your co-workers to become more effective workplace organizers, then this book has accomplished what it set out to do. As we argued in the first chapter, rank and file organizing in the workplace is the root source of organized labor's power. But the forces that make stronger unions necessary in the first place take shape outside the workplace, and even outside the nations we live in.

Many of the challenges facing workers on the job originate in today's world economy. They are shaped in corporate headquarters from New York to Tokyo, financial markets from Chicago to London, and competing plants or offices from North Carolina to South Korea. They are shaped, as well, in the complex process of politics where politicians and powerbrokers modify the workings of the global market. And, of course, they are affected by the national or company-wide bargaining that is often beyond the control of the local union.

At all of these levels, it matters a great deal how our national or international union leadership behaves. If they agree to concessions, it's harder for the rank and file to resist them. If they open the door to whipsawing between our workplaces, it becomes more difficult for us to close that door. If the union endorses candidates who receive giant donations from employers and who are beholden to the political agenda of business, such political influence as we have is squandered. If our labor leaders back a foreign policy that encourages our employers to relocate in low-wage nations, we are the losers.

In other words, union activists cannot afford to limit their scope to workplace issues alone. We must have an eye to politics: national union politics, local and national politics, and even international politics. This chapter is about how local union activists can (and must) go beyond the workplace to take on the big picture. (Appendix E lists some publications that will keep you informed about major trends.)

Who Are Our Allies?

Most important is knowing who our potential allies are at home and abroad. Our views on alliances should already be obvious from the examples in this book. Domestically, labor needs alliances with the movements for social change. These include the women's movement, organizations of Black, Latino, Asian, immigrant and other minority people, environmental activists with respect for the needs of working people, the family farm movement, and the many groups and networks promoting peace and justice at home and abroad.



Low-paid women workers occupy the offices of a South Korean company that does data processing for American clients.

Overseas, the allies we must seek out are found, first of all, in the new unions that are arising in the centers of Third World low-wage industry. The new unions in South Africa, South Korea, Brazil, Taiwan, and Central America are particularly important to North American workers because it is to many of these countries that our employers transfer work.

In Mexico, workers in auto, garment, education,

telecommunications and other industries are fighting to free their unions from the government-dominated labor federation, the CTM. These efforts could produce aggressive democratic unionism in Mexico, which may soon form the third partner in a North American common market.

The embryonic independent unions in China, the Soviet Union, and Eastern Europe are more potential allies, as those nations are drawn into the same competitive maelstrom that is battering our unions and communities. Helping to raise the standard of living of workers in the Third World and Eastern Europe by supporting militant and democratic unions there is the best shield against the competitive sword our employers dangle over our heads.

Finally, we believe that a new labor politics for the 1990s is essential to the success of resistance and the hope of a better future. Such a politics must reject the pro-business, free market assumptions that have dominated the 1980s in the U.S. and Canada. People must come before profits. This means secure jobs at livable wages. Guaranteed health care, childcare, and decent housing for everyone. Planned conversion from war production and environmentally unsound operations to safe, socially useful production. Equal opportunity for women and minorities, including immigrants. Habitable cities and viable family farms. Quality education. A foreign policy that not only recognizes the end of the East-West cold war, but puts a stop to U.S. support for hot wars and repressive governments in the Third World.

This is a tall order: one that neither the Republican nor the Democratic Parties can deliver. In the U.S., labor should follow the road Canadian labor took in the 1950s when it helped to form the New Democratic Party (NDP). While the formation of a new political party based on labor and the social movements will not end our problems by itself, as the Canadian example shows, it would be a giant step out of the political gridlock of the 1980s.

None of this will happen overnight and unionists might well ask: "If we can't even keep the boss off our back at work, how are we going to get half of what you propose?" The answer to this lies in the direction the North American labor movement takes in the 1990s.

Traditionalists vs. Innovators

The lines of demarcation in the labor movement are becoming clearer every year. In the first chapter we talked about the resisters vs. the collaborators. The resisters are the kind of people who have told their stories throughout this book; the collaborators are those who think of the union as a peace-keeping operation on the job. But there is another line of demarcation as well, this time in the loftier realm of politics. We might call this spectrum the "traditionalists" vs. the "innovators." Here again we see new, rank and file-based ideas and actions doing battle with an older, pro-business agenda.

The traditionalists are easy to recognize. Their

political agenda is limited to the AFL-CIO's routine domestic diet of labor legislation (Davis-Bacon, labor law reform, trade protection, unemployment insurance, minimum wage, workers comp). In foreign policy, the traditionalists seem to approve of virtually any Administration, Republican or Democratic, that promotes U.S. business interests abroad. Their cold war mind-set has outlasted the cold war.

When other social movements force issues such as poverty, civil rights, the Equal Rights Amendment,



or childcare onto the political agenda, labor's traditionalists will usually lend their support. But seldom do they take the initiative.

Their political methods of operation fall well within the bounds of American twin-party politics as usual. These include 1) conventional lobbying and 2) endorsements and contributions to candidates pre-selected by power brokers or wealthy business interests. This is done within the sanctified channels of the Democratic Party, no matter what it does or doesn't deliver. Even within this narrow field, the traditionalists have shunned the rare unconventional politicians, such as Jesse Jackson, who challenged the routine.

Neither the program nor the methods of the traditionalists addresses the massive abstention of working class voters from politics. In most elections only about one third of the electorate votes and the majority of these are among the most well-to-do sections of the population. Just as the collaborators fail to organize the millions of workers who have no union representation, so the political traditionalists ignore the "party of the non-voters," composed of working people who see no hope in the empty media matches that most elections have become. Far from proposing bold programs that might attract their interest or seeking a new political vehicle expressly designed for working class people, the traditionalists simply pour more money into media politics and try to appear respectable to the well-to-do voter. The slogan of the father of labor traditionalism, Samuel Gompers, was "More." That of today's traditionalists is "More of the same."

The innovators, on the other hand, are not afraid to call for far-reaching plans even though they know

their ideas will not get passed in the next session of Congress. Let's look at the activities of a few innovators who are not too timid to look at the world and say what should be different.

Innovators Push the Boundaries of Politics

Plant closings have been epidemic for the past decade or more. The traditionalists have generally been content to push for notification laws that buy a little time but don't tie the employer's hands. Tony Mazzocchi, Secretary-Treasurer of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers (OCAW) and one of labor's most outspoken innovators, has proposed a Superfund to provide union-level income and benefits to all workers displaced by plant closings. Such a Superfund would cover not only plants closed by business decisions but also those that need to be phased out because of environmental hazards or military cutbacks.

Others innovators have proposed the conversion of plants now producing military goods to useful civilian products. A coalition of ten unions, led by the Machinists, has been lobbying Congress for a conversion bill.

A number of unions have worked with the Jobs with Peace Campaign in several states to try to get state conversion laws. IBEW Local 2047 at the Unisys plant in St. Paul, Minnesota came up with over 100 products that could be made using their existing plant and technology. They have been working with Minnesota Jobs with Peace to get the company to consider alternative production.

During the 1980s innovators also proposed various forms of regional planning and public ownership. With private industry no longer willing to invest in their areas, these innovators reasoned, government would have to play a role. The virtual collapse of the steel industry in western Pennsylvania, eastern Ohio, and northern West Virginia led Steelworkers activists to form the Tri-State Conference on Steel—a labor-led coalition that included church and community organizations. They campaigned for the establishment of a Steel Valley Authority, an autonomous public agency modelled on the electricity-producing Tennessee Valley Authority, that would buy, modernize and operate steel plants. A modified version of the Steel Valley Authority was chartered by the state of Pennsylvania, but the funds to buy plants have not been forthcoming.

The shorter work week is another innovative approach to saving jobs. Beginning in the mid-1980s

Reparations for Plant Closings

The resisters and the innovators in the labor movement often hear the argument that they must knuckle down and knuckle under or they'll drive their company out of business. "At least you've got a job," say the business agents, explaining to the members why the union can't strike, can't resist speedup, can't do a corporate campaign, can't, can't, can't.

Here's what one worker whose plant did close thinks about that argument. He's for more resistance, not less, and for a truly innovative idea: corporate reparations to workers and communities damaged by plant closings.

Bud Schulte worked at the Iowa Pork plant in South St. Paul, Minnesota. You read in Chapter 3 about the strong shop floor organization that he and other stewards built there. The owner had received half a million dollars from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to refurbish the plant, with the idea that more jobs would be created. When rumors began that the owner would shut the plant, the workers began picketing during their lunch hours. Their signs asked "Where'd the HUD money go?" Bud Schulte tells how he analyzed the situation:

I had an opportunity to do a lot of television interviews after the plant closed, with a lot of reporters asking exactly the same question, "Did we drive them out of business?" Well, the case is that the company was making profits, but the owner decided that it was time to take the money and run.

This whole attitude that we have to economically guarantee the survival of these companies so they can

provide us with jobs is a lot of crap. If you look at it that way you're forced into this insecure, really defenseless position. If you look at the facts, plants have closed one right after another whether they were profitable or unprofitable. When plants decide to move, they move. If you're going to base your philosophy on providing them economic super-profits in order to make them stay in one location, then you're condemning yourself to be the lowest bidder.

We as union people—it's not our concern to keep these businesses healthy. That's a management function. Our function is to protect the rights of the people that work inside of these places.

If you go back to the foundation of the union movement, it was never the idea of the unions to protect the system. This whole thing has gotten turned topsy-turvy over the last 20 years. That's putting the cart before the horse. The truth of the matter is we do the work and we make the profits for them.

The government doesn't accept any kind of responsibility for what corporations do to us. The relationship between community and corporation only works one way: we give them the breaks and they make profits from our community. Corporations cry for tax breaks and all kinds of financial incentives, and government responds to that. But when a company makes a decision to pull out and leave a community, the government has no response to those people, the social fabric that's left.

So I feel it's a direct government responsibility to respond to what happens to a community. Force a company to make reparations for what they're going to do by moving a plant. That should be part of the cost of doing business.

At least we got the company to pay back the money they had taken out of the coffers of our community in the form of this government money, the HUD money. We said, Hey, you're leaving, put it back. Somebody else may want to come into the community and really need that money. Put it back.

many unions in Europe began a concerted push to shorten work time. In the spring of 1990 the German metalworkers union won the 35-hour week starting in 1995. In Britain strikes in 1989 and 1990 by a coalition of unions in aerospace and other metalworking companies led to a 37-hour week. Innovators in the U.S. and Canada have taken note of this trend because of the lengthening of the work week in similar industries here. The Canadian Auto Workers struck Ford Motor Co. for shorter worktime in 1990.

The shorter work week isn't now a legislative proposal like many of the others mentioned here, but it could, of course, become a legislative demand as it was in 1886 when organized labor called a general strike in support of the eight-hour day.

Even the traditionalists now support national health insurance. But the AFL-CIO's position is so vague that it leaves the shaping of such legislation to Congress itself. A coalition of labor and health care organizations led by the OCAW has proposed to Congress a specific national program based on Canada's public health care system.

Where to get the money, of course, is the question the innovators always run into. Dick Greenwood of the Machinists says that the unions pushing for a conversion bill found that the politicians "all want to do something on the cheap, and it can't be done on the cheap." Tony Mazzocchi says that politicians are quick to argue there's no money for a Superfund; he points out that they came up with hundreds of billions for the savings and loan bail-out.

A New Party

Mazzocchi, like other innovators, says that today's pro-business political priorities are not a result of a general lack of money. Nor are they caused by the federal deficit (in fact, those priorities created the

deficit). Rather they are the consequence of business domination of both major parties. He advocates a new labor-based party in the U.S. He sees this as a long-range fight, but has gotten his union on record in favor of the idea.

The United Electrical Workers also wants such a development. UE Secretary-Treasurer Amy Newell gave a stirring appeal for independent political action by labor at the May 1989 conference on New Directions for Labor, sponsored by Labor Notes.

A survey distributed to OCAW members nationally, UAW Region 9, and one Carpenters local showed a majority thought "it was time for labor to build a new independent political party of working people." Surprisingly, the results were similar in these very different unions: OCAW 53%, UAW 57%, Carpenters 57%.

Innovators in Canada are quick to note that just having a labor party doesn't solve everything. New Democratic Party candidates are not funded by business contributions, as are both major U.S. parties, but those heading the NDP in recent years have tried to distance themselves from labor in hopes of winning over the more affluent voters. CAW President Bob White and many other Canadian unionists expressed disgust at the NDP leadership's failure to take on the free trade issue in the 1989 national elections. The Canadians remind U.S. innovators that being an innovator is a long-term job.

Many unionists concerned about the futility of politics-as-usual joined the Jesse Jackson campaigns in 1984 and 1988. Supporting an African-American leader for President of the United States was an innovation in itself, but what attracted many unionists to Jackson was his hard-hitting populist message and economic program. Jackson's appearances at dozens of picket lines signaled that he stood for something different than politics as usual. Activists were also heart-

Write-In Election Mobilizes Pittston Strikers

During the 1989-1990 Pittston strike, the United Mine Workers went beyond militant strike tactics (see Chapter 11) to enter electoral politics.

On November 7, 1989, UMWA District 28 President Jackie Stump pulled off a stunning victory: he was elected to Virginia's House of Delegates (the state legislature) by a 2-1 margin, running as an independent write-in candidate.

The victory was all the more impressive because Stump had announced his candidacy only three weeks before election day. And victory was sweet because Stump trounced Democrat Donald McGlothlin, Sr., the 20-year incumbent and father of the judge who had fined the miners over \$65 million in their strike against Pittston.

It had become clear during the strike that the regular party politicians were not on the miners' side. The federal and Virginia state courts levied massive fines against the union. State representatives—usually Democrats who claimed to be friends of labor—lent no support. And the

Democratic governor refused to mediate an end to the strike; instead, Governor Gerald Baliles sent in state troopers to protect company property and harass strikers and their supporters, costing taxpayers \$1 million per month.

In the campaign, union members worked quickly to teach voters how to write in a candidate. Every household in the district was visited during the campaign. Support groups drove voters to the polls. Union members distributed 40,000 camouflage pencils imprinted with Stump's name (camouflage was the miners' symbol, signifying "class warfare in southwest Virginia").

The electoral tactic was modeled after a UMWA campaign in 1986, in which six miners were elected to the West Virginia legislature and local offices. (Several have been reelected since.) They have led the successful fight to turn back a "right-to-work" bill in West Virginia.

The UMWA hopes Stump can lead a move to chip away at Virginia's anti-labor laws.

ened by the possibilities for Black and white unity which were shown in the broad support for Jackson within the labor movement. The forces of caution and money in the Democratic Party, however, blocked the Jackson supporters' efforts to shake up the status quo, as they have so many times before.

In 1989 and 1990 the issue of freedom of choice on abortion became the cutting edge question for many women in the labor movement. They are



waging a battle to get their unions to ally with the women's movement on this issue rather than remain neutral. Union buses to pro-choice demonstrations were one of the early results of this fight. For these women, it makes sense for unions to be in the forefront of an issue of personal freedom rather than sit out one of the most important battles of the decade.

International Connections

Finally, one of the most heated fights within the labor movement in recent years has been over foreign policy. Many rank and file union members have very little idea how deeply the AFL-CIO is involved in conducting its own foreign policy. In fact, a Reagan Administration official once described the AFL-CIO's cold war-style foreign policy as "to the right" of their own. The Federation spends as much or more money annually on foreign affairs as on its U.S. operations—almost \$40 million.

A committee of 20 international union presidents, called the National Labor Committee in Support of Democracy and Human Rights in El Salvador, has fought the AFL-CIO's aggressive support of U.S. intervention in that region. Dozens of local labor-based committees have conducted the same fight from the grassroots level. These innovators have called on the AFL-CIO and the U.S. government to abandon their support of pro-business dictators in Latin America. They have called for a democratic foreign policy that recognizes national sovereignty and draws on one of labor's nobler traditions, internationalism.

Those opposed to the AFL-CIO's foreign policy

state simply that U.S. labor ought not to be aiding and abetting regimes that crush unions. As former ACTWU staffer Dan Cantor and economist Juliet Schor point out in their book, *Tunnel Vision: Labor, The World Economy, and Central America*, it makes no sense for U.S. unions to encourage the preservation of "cheap labor" in the Third World. On the contrary, our unions should be lending all the aid they can to unions in developing nations, in order to raise their living standards.

The question of international labor solidarity has become a very practical one in this era of intensifying international economic integration. Many of us are employed by the same multinational corporations that now employ workers in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Europe. They play on our national, linguistic, and cultural differences like a fine-tuned fiddle. They can often carry on operations in one country when they are struck in another.

Fortunately, international labor solidarity is not as beyond our means as it might seem. Growing labor movements now exist in many of the new Third World sites of production. The new unions in Asia, Latin America, and Africa are asking for support from unions in the U.S., Canada, and Europe. But their message isn't getting through to the ranks because the traditionalists are hanging up the phone.

Union-based solidarity committees have therefore been formed in recent years to raise funds, organize speaking tours, support embattled unions overseas and develop face-to-face contact between North American and Third World unionists (some are listed in Appendix E).

Perhaps most important is the creation of worker-to-worker and union-to-union contacts within multinational corporations and within industries. Such international networks already exist in a few global industries, such as the sugar industry. The Amsterdam-based Transnationals Information Exchange (TIE) has held worldwide meetings of activists in the auto, telecommunications, rubber/tires, and cocoa/chocolate industries. These networks exchange information on company strategy and shop floor conditions.

All these ideas and activities of the innovators embody the values of human solidarity, social responsibility, and democratic empowerment—all essential labor values. They emphasize programs that apply to all working people, not just union members, and their communities. They can help organized labor reach out to all working class people (employed or unemployed) and once again become a force for change.

The Convergence of Resisters and Innovators

The political innovators, then, share common values with the resisters profiled throughout this book. Both seek to limit the power and authority of the employers—the foreman on the shop floor, the tycoon on Wall Street. They share the realization that for



Jim West

Members of UAW Local 600 listen to Nelson Mandela speak at the Ford Rouge plant in Dearborn, Michigan.

working people to win anything from corporate America, they must fight for it. The collaborators and the traditionalists, on the other hand, share a sympathy for the employers—one in the realm of bargaining, the other in politics and foreign affairs.

The resisters and the innovators also share a common commitment to active solidarity. Their ideas are meant to unite working people. Both groups seek to broaden their constituency—and their fight—beyond the group initially involved. The resisters turn to other unionists and to community organizations for support; the innovators want to build a political movement based on similar alliances.

For labor to become a powerful force in today's global competition-driven world, there must be a convergence of the resisters and the innovators. Those

resisters who don't see foreign policy or social questions as "union issues" had better think again. The employers see them this way and work to enforce their own world view in every aspect of life, through politics, the media, the courts, and whatever other means they can think of. Likewise, innovators who think that shop floor unionism is hopeless and that only politics will save the labor movement had better ask themselves where the power base for their ideas will come from.

If these forces grow and converge they have the potential to remake the unions into viable democratic organizations, to organize the unorganized, to make new strategies and tactics a day-to-day occurrence, and to begin creating a new labor politics. It won't be easy, but it is our best hope for a decent future.

Appendix A: Corporate Campaign Questionnaire

Following is a slightly shortened version of a questionnaire used by the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers when initiating a corporate campaign. (See the interview process described by Dick Leonard in

Chapter 13.) Although some of the questions are not applicable in other industries, we have included them to indicate how thorough your interviews should be.

Oil and Chemical Industry Local Investigations Outline

A. Members and retirees when taken together know more about shady corporate activities than does the plant manager. Workers are a gold mine of information and are the heart and soul of a campaign.

B. The interview process consists of one or more general interview sessions with large groups of members using the full investigations outline. Follow-up interviews with individuals or smaller groups are usually necessary. Interviews are best conducted by someone who is knowledgeable about the industry but not employed in that particular plant.

C. The more the merrier. Each member has a story to tell. Members should represent all phases of the operation. Retirees are extremely important.

D. Interview office, clerical, technical employees to the extent that they are approachable. Ex-supervisors are often bitter and therefore talkative. Extend interviews to nearby plants if possible. Handbill regional office headquarters with organizing literature. Develop an organizing committee among clericals. Interview them.

E. The interview process will take at least one and possibly two days in a large group setting. A narrowed version of the outline can be directed at a specific employee or a small group with specialized knowledge.

F. Rumors are crucial. They are usually true or close to the truth and can be verified with further interviews or trips to the courthouse, library, etc.

G. The process should involve large numbers of rank and file members in exciting ways. Often a member, sensing the importance of what they know, will

enthusiastically seek out additional information from other co-workers, office contacts, etc. Following a general interview many workers should find themselves with follow-up assignments to pursue leads, gather materials, etc. One-on-one contact is crucial in the case of the member who knows a great deal but is reluctant to talk, or who is approachable by just one or two other individuals.

H. Do not be unnecessarily secretive about this process as it can limit the broad participation required for success. Often the very process of your investigation can be a strong pressure on the company and its managers.

I. The outline is not all-inclusive. There are literally hundreds of local, state and federal regulations with which companies must comply. We have only scratched the surface when it comes to the ways in which managers are vulnerable, not only to law enforcement authorities but to corporate higher-ups, their peers and the community in general.

I. The Plant and the Community

A. Plant History

- Aerial photo, scale drawing or blueprint of plant
- When built
- Expanded, where, how, when
- Costs of expansions
- Expansion plans and projected costs
- Previous owners and their background
- Scrapbook or clipping file

- Complete collection of company newsletters and anonymous newsletters
- Collection of company financial statements, etc.
- Company as defendant in suits—where, when
- Law firm used
- Other company facilities and offices in area
- History of floods, earthquake damage, hurricanes
- Parent company—names, major shareholders
- Is company currently applying for a *permit* to expand, build, transport or do *anything*?
- Does local own a share of stock?
- “Strategic mission” of plant
- Corporate philosophy—ethics policy, environmental policy, human relations policy

B. Property and Taxes

- Ownership of parcels
- Facilities here or elsewhere in area leased from who
- Ownership of adjacent property
 - Does plant border public land?
 - Industrial Revenue Bonds outstanding
 - Tax breaks, property or other
 - Correctly zoned
- Recent property tax scandals in the community

C. Community/Neighborhood

- Surrounding area—residential, rural, commercial or mixed
- Nearest residential area
- Nearest school
- Nearest large factory
- Neighborhood at risk—air, noise, fire, explosion
- Perception of neighbors of these “risks”
- Plant security
 - Name of security company, owner and background
 - Condition of fences
- Plant and neighborhood evacuation plan
- Historical relationship with neighborhood and community
- Community groups with gripes or potential gripes
 - Religious, interfaith
 - Neighborhood
 - Environmental
 - Ethnic
 - Right-to-know
 - General (e.g., League of Women Voters)
 - Goals/objections
 - Leadership
 - Power base
 - Files on company
 - History
- Make-up of neighborhood—ethnic, racial, age, income groups, etc.
- Names of workers who are residents of the immediate neighborhood
- County seat, municipality
- Role of company in political history of area
- County commissioner and city council types
 - Relationship with company
 - Friends and enemies
- Groups friendly to company or plant
- Sponsorships in community

- Other groups or individuals who the company might describe as an “enemy”

D. Environmental

- History of fires, explosions, spills, miscellaneous “accidents”
 - How can these be documented?
- Alarms, evacuation procedures
- Condition of dikes
- Condition of fire fighting system
 - Fire department close by
 - Trained crew
 - Hydrant/monitor system adequate
 - Hoses okay
- Role and functioning of safety committees—minutes?
- OSHA history
 - Wall to wall inspection—when
 - Results
 - Citations and fines
 - Other health surveys
 - Suspected health problems
 - Contractor safety problems
- Air, groundwater, soil
 - History, EPA or local air and water quality agencies’ surveys
 - Complaints
 - Fines
 - Suspected problems—cover-ups
 - Well water on premises
 - Drinkable
 - Tested
 - Condition of buried lines, tank bottoms, ground water saturated
- Dumping—wastes
 - On-site and off-site dumping, last 20 years
 - Who drove trucks; locations; materials
 - Dumping suspected legal or illegal
 - Weigh stations avoided
 - Company ever cited, fined
 - Outside contractors used to haul waste—where
- Water treatment facilities
 - When installed and why
 - Adequate/legal
 - Effluent monitored—by whom
 - Bypassed
 - Possibility of direct discharge of runoff, chemical oil spills, or sewer water into waterways
 - Downstream water intakes and reservoirs for drinking or recreation

E. Utilities

- Suppliers of natural gas, electric, water
- Locations of meters
 - All meters regularly read
 - Meters ever bypassed
- Municipal sewage system
 - Effluent regularly monitored
 - How is company billed?
- Well water for plant use
 - Intermingled with city water—fire system or drinking system
- Nearest fire department station

- History of complaints by department about the plant
- In-plant fire system, hydrants, monitors, etc.
- City water used
- Used for purposes other than fires, i.e., cooling, cleaning
- Portable hose meters used and read

F. Financial Community

- Local banks that company does business with
- Financial or blood relationship between company management and bank management
- Expansions—how financed

G. Media

- Contacts—friends, relatives working for TV, radio, newspaper and other area publications
- Reporters, columnists or talk show hosts favorable to union

H. Universities and Public Library

- Names, addresses in greater area
- Friendly professors
- Workers or sons and daughters of workers who attend and/or who are familiar with university library resources and public library systems

II. Products, Product Flow, Markets

A. Products

- Description and relative volumes of each product
- End uses
- Seasonal variations and why

B. Processes—Manufacturing Practices

- Flow charts and descriptions
- Maintenance practices (undesirable)
- Inefficient or wasteful practices
 - Wasted time
 - Wasted raw material or product
 - Wasted labor
- Condition of units, lines, tanks, loading
- Turn-around practices
- Production and work schedules
 - Health, fatigue, efficiency aspects
- Manning practices
 - Adequate in emergencies

C. Quality

- Product uniformity (*all* products)
- Specs maintained
- Goof-ups—product specs or equipment design—concealed by whom
- Off-spec product return—diluted with good product
- Customer knowledge of the above
- Diary of events (dates, times, places, supervisor in charge)
- Short measures/gallonage accurate

C. Competitors

- Relationships—casual, congenial, fearful
- Competitors that are feared and why
- Competitors' reason for success

- Names of top officers of competitors
- Ownership—management or blood relationship with company
- Owners of competing firms seen hanging out with company
- Competitors seen on company premises
- Personnel exchanged
- Cross hauling—raw material or product—from who, why
- Contracts rotated in peculiar patterns or cycles among competitors
- Pricing and costs
 - Unit costs
 - Implied costs
 - Values—suspected profits
 - High profit lines—why
 - Discriminatory pricing/sales
 - Predatory or below-cost pricing

E. Customers

- Wholesale
 - List of customers, addresses and products delivered
 - Deliveries checkerboarded geographically or at random
 - Relative importance (volumes)
 - Fussy customers, particular on quality, delivery
 - Product liability-type cases
 - Ownership or blood relationship interlocks
 - History—returned product
 - Customers that get unusual attention
 - Backdoor or midnight deliveries—to whom
 - Deliveries without invoice procedure—to whom
 - Deliveries of product that is too high in sulfur, metals, etc.
- Government
 - Government, municipal, etc. contracts—expire when
 - Properly bid—competitively
 - Reported profitability of these contracts
 - Volumes, prices specified in contracts
 - Blood or outside commercial/social relationship between company and government officials
- Retail
 - Percent product sold to competitors' outlets
 - Percent product sold to owned outlets
 - Number of outlets, locations, names and addresses of managers and employees (maps)
 - Company having problem getting zoning changes for new stations
 - Outlets company-owned and operated or operated by lessee
 - Brand variation in market area
 - Percent sold within 50 miles, 100 miles of plant (market size)
 - Percent of entire market (market share) in area
 - Where are the stations with highest gallonages?
 - Price or quality the major concern
 - Company outlets where company product *not* used on regular basis
 - Location of marketing office or headquarters
 - Contacts here

Substitution of leaded/unleaded or different octanes

F. Suppliers

Raw materials, purchased products, including suppliers of machinery and equipment, etc.
Relative volumes
Supplier companies, locations, owners' names
Quality problems
Company relationship to suppliers
Suspicious pricing arrangements
Backdoor or midnight deliveries
Personnel exchanged or rotated
Blood or financial relationship

G. Outside Contractors

Names, locations, unionized
Blood or ownership relationship with company management
Workers properly licensed, skilled, trained
Past history of owner—criminal record
Names and addresses of workers
Gratuities and favors paid by contractors to company supervisors

H. Transportation/Distribution

Methods for transporting
Products
Raw materials
Waste materials
Own personnel and company-owned or leased trucks and ships
Outside firms
Blood or ownership relationship
Personnel exchanges at supervisory levels
Materials properly transported
Department of Transportation-type violations
Overweight—weigh stations circumvented
Trucks properly maintained
Truck routes followed
Hazardous cargo/residential neighborhoods
Noise problems
Coast Guard regulations violated at docks
History of "accidents" and disasters
Company response
Pipelines, in and out—who owns
Destination
Residential areas

III. Company Personnel

A. Plant Managers, Industrial Relations Persons, Supervisors, Owners, Officers, Buyers, Sales People

Structure chart with names, titles and duties shown
Psychological profile of key managers: temperament, defensiveness, arrogance, personal ambitions, etc.
Local or imported from where
Past work history

Why left previous job
Second jobs
Other businesses—moonlighting
Relationships to subcontractors (blood and financial)
Relationships to customers
Relationships to supplier companies
Theft of company materials or products
"Unauthorized" use of company labor
Criminal or civil convictions
Real estate owned in area
Owned jointly with whom
Parents, wills, probate (inheritance)
Friends, associates in community—who do they hang out with?
Addresses; also spouses' names
Mailing list of managers, technicians, supervisors
Photos of managers
Salary schedules
Expense accounts, clubs
Kickbacks, rumors, phony companies
Feuds among bosses—splits, rumors
Relationship between plant managers and headquarters big shots
On the way up
On the way down
Nepotism
Those kept on payroll for no apparent reason
Big spenders
In debt—personal bankruptcy
Gamblers
Alcohol, etc.
Driving record
Sexual harassment
Ties with political parties, political bosses

B. Ex-Managers, Bosses, Officers, Supervisors

Names, addresses, phone numbers
Work histories
Disgruntled, axed out, disabled
Grudges, retired early
Victimized, injured
Approachable by whom

C. Office, Clerical, Technical

Names, duties, addresses
Friendly to union or union persons
Approachable by whom

D. Quality of Supervision and Management

Excess numbers of supervisors
Inefficient work scheduling
Lousy work design or engineering
Employee suggestions ignored—examples
Outrageous inefficiencies—examples

★ ★ ★

The investigations team will also, of course, gather full information on bargaining unit workers: make-up of the workforce, the contract, bargaining history, main gripes, health problems, individuals with helpful skills, etc.

Appendix B:

Researching Your Employer

by Ken Blum

There are many reasons for digging out information about your employer:

- to locate other plants and offices, so you can build solidarity with the workers there.
- to find out your company's true financial status so you are better prepared for bargaining, especially demands for concessions.
- to get an idea of your company's future plans for mergers, acquisitions, and shutdowns.

You can also use research skills to find information about your local and International union and officers which may be useful in an election or a protest movement.

Your first step is to situate your workplace in your company.

- What is the parent company that owns your facility?
- What other facilities does this company own? Does it own other companies as well?
- What do those other facilities and companies produce?
- How many workers are employed there?
- Are those workers in unions?
- How has business been for the company in the last year? The last three years?

The research department of your International union may be able to provide you with this information. However, you can also find out a great deal on your own. Publicly owned and traded companies, that is, companies which are owned by stockholders, are required by law to make a great deal of information available to the public. Some of the information will be available in your local or branch library, and most of it will be available at a big city library. You may also be able to find it at a college library.

Employees

If your workplace is part of a big company, you may want to compare its size to that of other plants and get a feel for the relative importance of the different components. Often the only way to do this is by comparing the employment figures for each plant. Keep in mind that the total employment for any location includes office personnel as well as production workers.

- Manufacturing Directories for the state or metropolitan area are available in public libraries, with titles like *Michigan Manufacturers Directory* or *Maryland Industrial Directory*. (You may be able to simply call the library and ask for this information.) Try to find the most up-to-date edition. Unfortunately, some directories only give employment ranges, e.g. 1,000-5,000, so it is necessary to find additional sources.

- Call the company and speak to the receptionist to verify the information you found in the directory. Example, "I'm making a study of manufacturing on the west side of Cincinnati, and I understand your plant on Green St. employs 350 people. Is that correct?" (You may also then ask, "Is there a union? What is its name?") Ninety percent of the time you will get an answer, although you may get transferred around some.

Public and Not-for-profit Employers

Public employees can get their agency's budget, which is usually quite detailed. If necessary, federal employees can use a Freedom of Information Act request, and some states have Freedom of Information laws as well.

Not-for-profit organizations are required by law to keep on the premises their Internal Revenue Service 990 Form. This financial statement details salaries, income and expenses.

Products made

The above manufacturing directories will show Standard Industrial Classifications (SIC's). This is a method of classifying every industry by a number in a systematic way. All non-durable manufactured goods (those that are consumed in under a year) begin with the number 2. Durable goods begin with the number 3. Food products are 20, textiles 22, primary metals 33, etc. Then additional digits are added for further detail, e.g., 331 are foundries, 3321 are grey iron foundries, 3322 malleable iron foundries, etc. Every plant has a primary SIC, the main thing it produces, and there may be many secondary SICs.

Public and private companies

Public companies are traded on the various stock exchanges and anyone can buy a share of them. There are over 10,000 such companies that report regularly to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), and so make available much useful information. All other companies are private or closely held, usually by the members of one family. They do not have to make information available to the public.

Parent companies and subsidiaries

Many well-known companies are actually subsidiaries of bigger companies that are not known to the public. It's important to know who the parent company is, so you can see what else they own.

• *Standard & Poor's Register of Corporations, Directors and Executives* or *Dun and Bradstreet's Million Dollar Directory*. They list both publicly traded and closely held corporations. This will tell you if the company is a subsidiary or not. *Standard and Poor's* tells you if they are traded on a stock exchange (NYSE—New York Stock Exchange, AMEX—American Stock Exchange, OTC—"Over The Counter"). These directories will give you sales in dollars, which is useful in establishing the company's size.

Material on public companies

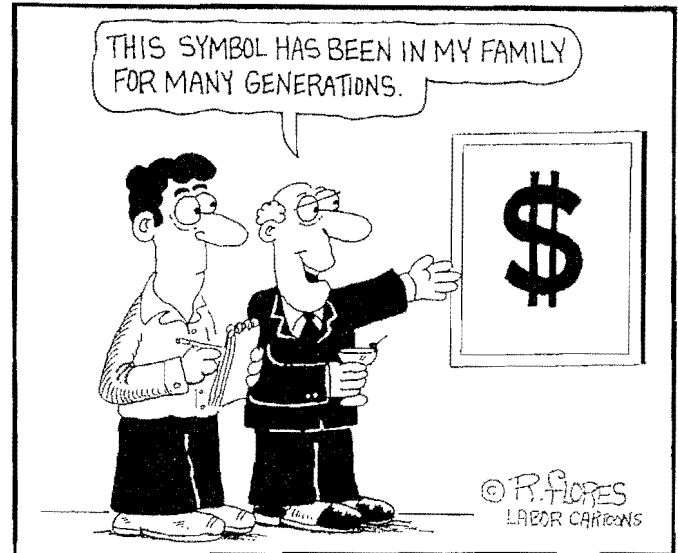
Call the public library and ask the librarian to look in *Standard and Poor's* to get the address and phone number of the company you are researching. The simplest thing to do is call the company and get the Annual Report, the Proxy Report and the 10-K. You can also use all of the following:

• **Moody's Manuals.** These books are often available in branch or local libraries. They come out yearly and are updated weekly. They give the following information:

- 1) History of the company—when it started, when it bought important subsidiaries and sold others
- 2) Business—what it makes
- 3) Properties—often a list of plants, including in foreign countries
- 4) Subsidiaries—which may have totally different names from the parent company
- 5) Financial data:

- a) an Income Statement, or total sales, costs, interest paid and profits (or loss) before and after taxes
- b) a Balance Sheet—assets and liabilities that tell how much the company owes in debt to bondholders and banks, and how much of an investment the stockholders have in the company.

The most important of the Moody Manuals is *Moody's Industrial Manual* on the giant manufacturing



corporations. Some companies are not traded on the big stock exchanges; they may be included in the *OTC Manual*, which means "Over The Counter," that is, the stock brokers arrange the buying and selling of the shares. Other Moody's Manuals include: *Utilities*, *Transportation*, and *Financial*.

• **Annual Reports and Proxy Reports.** The Annual Report has information not in *Moody's*, especially a description of the business in the last year. It gives sales and profits of each major product line. The Proxy Report is a short report sent to each stockholder so they can turn over their "proxy," that is their vote, to the company's directors if they don't intend to go to the annual stockholders meeting. This report shows whether anyone owns more than five percent of the stock and also the salaries and stockholding of top officers.

You may simply write to the corporation at its headquarters (address and phone number in *Moody's* or *Standard and Poor's*) and ask them for a copy of the latest annual report and proxy statement. No reason need be given for the request, and they will almost always send at least the annual report—they will presume that you are interested in buying shares. Some libraries keep files of annual reports, and others have them available on micro-fiche (similar to microfilm—the library will probably have a reader-printer so you can read and copy the report).

• **SEC 10-K Report.** Every publicly traded company must file a report with the Securities and Exchange Commission called the 10-K Report. The 10-K may be available on micro-fiche in a big city library or a university library. Or you can call or write to the company and ask for it. It will sometimes show the

maximum output (capacity) of each plant owned by the company, or the square footage. The 10-K has the best description of the business and is the only source you can be sure will have employment figures.

Sales and market share

- *Marketing Economics Key Plants*. For each 4-digit Standard Industrial Classification, this book shows every plant in the country by industry. For example, in SIC 2011, meatpacking, it shows all the meatpacking plants in order by state. It also shows employment for each. It also has a listing by state, showing all the plants in SIC order. The weakness of the book is that the employment figures are not too accurate.

- TRINET, a computer data base on DIALOG. This gives more accurate employment and sales figures, and market share. You have to go to a large library for this. You can search by company, so you can find all of your company's plants in the country. It will also give you all the plants in the country within a 4-digit industry, with pretty precise employment figures. Be careful; this can be expensive. It is 50 cents per plant listed for a complete report, though a more experienced searcher can do it more cheaply.

The Business Press

There are various indexes which give the title of magazine and newspaper articles and the periodical name, number, date and page on which they can be found.

- *F&S Index for U.S. Corporations and Industries*, published by Predicasts, is available in most big city libraries. Under a corporation's name are the titles of articles that appeared in various business periodicals, including some quite specialized. For example, under Bethlehem Steel can be found many articles in *American Metal Marketing*, but also in *Ceramics*, *Thirty-3*, and the *Wall Street Transcript*. This last publication prints presentations of top officers to Wall Street stockbrokers and contains information available nowhere else.

- *Business Periodicals Index* covers the more popular magazines like *Fortune*, *Forbes*, *Barrons*, and *Business Week*. Articles in these magazines can be quite revealing, but rather than going first to the individual magazines, check first in this index.

Newspapers

- Newspapers on microfilm. Most big city libraries and college libraries have *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and the major daily newspapers of that city available on microfilm. They will also probably have the indexes of those newspapers in book form.

- Newspaper "morgues." In some big cities the newspapers have libraries or "morgues" open to the public. Here you can get all the clippings on a particular company. Sometimes it's possible to simply call the newspaper, ask for the library, give them the company name, and take down the dates of the articles

over the phone. Then go to the library and look up the articles (probably on microfilm). This may turn up information on strikes, consumer boycotts, discrimination, pollution and other items of interest.

- Newspaper abstracts. In many cities abstracts of the main daily paper are available.

- Library clipping files. Some public libraries keep clippings of local newspaper and magazine articles by company name.

Computer data bases

A great deal of information about corporations is now available on computer data bases. Some of the most useful are found on DIALOG, such as "Trade and Industry News" and "TRINET." Check with your local library or university library to see what services they have and what information they provide. They may be able to do a free computer search on a specific topic, such as your company or International union.

Union officials' salaries, by-laws

You may want to get information on a local union, either your own or one at another plant. The Office of Labor Management Services (OLMS) has LM-2 Reports filed annually by all local unions which represent private sector employees. These reports tell you the total dues income of the local and the amount of the dues. If the union has fixed dues you may be able to figure how many dues-payers there are. Most interesting is the list of salaries and expenses of all union officers and employees of the local who make over \$10,000 a year. Every local is also required to have on file at the nearest OLMS area office an up-to-date copy of their by-laws which you can inspect and copy. You do not have to be a member of the local to request this information.

Look in the phone book under U.S. Government, Labor Department, Office of Labor Management Services for the nearest OLMS office (there are 30 offices with reports on file). If there is no listing look for the Federal Information Center, also under U.S. Government.

National Labor Relations Board complaints

All cases filed with the NLRB are entered in a public docket. Anyone can go into an NLRB office and look through this docket looking for the name of a particular company or local union.

Internal union complaints

File a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request with the local OLMS office over any actions affecting a particular local union. This may turn up charges of undemocratic elections, health and welfare or pension fraud, or other violations of the Landrum-Griffin or Pension Reform Acts.

Appendix C: Union Newspapers and Rank and File Newsletters

The following reprints of *Labor Notes* Stewards Corner columns contain much helpful advice for beginning (or experienced) labor journalists and shop floor agitators. For some book-length guides, see Appendix E on Resources.



Stewards Corner — May 1984

How A Local Newspaper Can Get the Membership Involved

by Mary Baird

...The editor of a labor paper is of far more importance to the Union and the Movement than the President or any other officer of the Union...

—Eugene V. Debs, *Metalworker*, 1904

I have seen a newsletter give a local union a new face, new life. At an Ohio Bell local in Cleveland, there had been no regular publication for years. Communications Workers Local 4304's *Crosstalk* helped to bring the union back to the members and the members back into the union. Here are some steps we took to "reach out and touch" the membership.

Enlist Membership Input

Members will read it if they're a part of it. You'll never get a large number of people to submit articles on their own, but there are ways to get them into the paper and their concerns into print:

- **Mail-in survey.** One of our first surveys was an unfinished drawing of a nameless union member and a blank word-balloon. The item was called "Sound-Off" and members were asked to fill in the balloon with their main gripe or concern. Next issue, we printed the responses.

Last bargaining round, *Crosstalk* gave members a direct line to negotiations by printing a mail-in survey. We printed the results and forwarded them to the local and national bargaining committees.

- **Roving reporter.** *Crosstalk* does a feature article, with photographs, every two or three issues on a

particular group of workers—covering the nature of their work, problems they're facing, their opinions about the company, and their ideas on how the union can better represent them.

For example, *Crosstalk* recently ran a feature story on the people who clean Ohio Bell buildings, who often refer to themselves as the "forgotten ones." They told their story to their 900-plus union brothers and sisters: the company is contracting out their work. They want the union to fight harder on their behalf, and they need the backing of their brothers and sisters in other classifications.

This is the type of article that gets the most positive feedback. People need to have their say about things they like and dislike. They need to hear what others have to say. When it comes time for a walkout or job action by one group of workers, others are more informed, more connected, and more concerned.

- **Grievance update column.** Our vice president summarizes the status of current grievances that are of interest to everyone or those that stewards can use as precedents.

- **Phone-around surveys.** January 1984 ushered in AT&T's divestiture, so we ran a feature on all the happenings around the local that reflected the combined impact of divestiture and technological change. Information was obtained from conversations with chief stewards in the various departments.

- **Opinion page.** *Crosstalk's* policy is to print any signed article or letter a member submits, with the

right to edit for length. People can and do debate policy and politics; some question local and national union positions.

An examples is the series of articles from various members on the pros and cons of the Quality of Work Life program. Despite the heated controversy and criticism from both official union and company channels, the local defends the right of members to decide for themselves the validity of policies set down or negotiated by their elected leadership.

In this way the newsletter says, in effect, that the leadership respects members' views. The union is projected as a composite of its members and their varied concerns, and not as an impersonal monolith that dictates how the members should think, act, or vote.

● **Ongoing talent search.** Some members express themselves best in artwork, poetry, photos, puzzles, or cartoons. Use the stewards organization to seek it out. *Crosstalk* found its main cartoonist when stewards told us about the great caricatures he did for office bulletin boards. G. Walker's "Billy the Beeper" series has given *Crosstalk* its own original comic strip that relates uniquely to phone workers.

One member's wife wrote a poem about the union. We printed that, along with thank-you notes for the family picnic written by some members' children. Others papers have run photo contests or printed children's drawings.

● **Human interest stories.** Members like stories about what they do off the job—special hobbies, talents, activities in the community. One of Local 4304's members is a semi-professional clown who performs for retarded children and at union picnics. We ran a front-page spread on "Clowning Around with Wally" when he retired.

● **Input by hook or by crook.** I call it the "tooth-pulling" method of getting members to contribute. You will always get the "I can't write" syndrome from 95% of your membership. Tell them to jot down phrases, comments, any old thing to get the word out. Offer to help put it in readable form, sound it out with the author, and print it. Be a ghost writer, take dictation. Anything—just get people comfortable with the notion that you don't have to be a crackpot journalist to have a say in union affairs, report on events, or share your gripes and ideas.

Sell the Union

Too often, workers assume that benefits have been given to them out of the goodness of the company's heart. The paper should publicize every victory or benefit forged by the union. *Crosstalk* footnotes the holidays in the monthly calendar as "benefits won by your union through negotiations."

● **Publicize victorious strikes, court settlements, and arbitration awards won by your own and other unions.** Report all grievance victories and cases won by the workers' compensation committee. Publicize all monetary settlements—back pay awards, lost overtime or wage recovery, etc.

● **Highlight contract protections.** We do a regular "Know Your Rights" column, usually featuring a section in the contract like vacations, seniority, or transfer rights.

● **Do human interest stories on members who are helped out by the local.** *Crosstalk* covered one situation where a member and his family lost nearly all they owned in a fire, and the union collected money to help recoup their losses.

Build Solidarity with Other Workers

Building solidarity among different groups within the local is a first step. *Crosstalk's* workgroup stories help do that, as does coverage of various job ac-



tions. We did a feature on a walkout led by coin telephone technicians when a co-worker was falsely accused of theft, suspended, and threatened with the loss of his job. The lesson members learned from this was that sticking together won that man's job back.

In addition, the event was no longer an isolated occurrence. Through its portrayal in the local paper, it became something that could happen to any union member, and set a precedent for united action in the future.

Coverage of other unions' struggles is essential, particularly when you can show that they are directly related to threats faced by your own union.

In Cleveland, stewards and members of several unions marched in protest of Greyhound's concessions demands on the ATU last year. *Crosstalk* told that story from a solid union viewpoint and pictured our own stewards marching with the Greyhound strikers. This offensive by Greyhound and the ATU's resistance could be seen as a scenario we too would face in the not too distant future.

Labor history is another vehicle for building solidarity, a sense of having "roots" as union members. *Crosstalk* featured the big Labor Day parade held in Cleveland last year. Alongside this front-page spread was a "Yesterday" story on Labor Day in Cleveland in 1911, when 20,000 workers turned out to support striking garment workers.

Analyze Attacks on Labor

Some portions of the mainstream labor press tend to underplay or even cover up the real plight of unions today. By accurately exposing labor's defensive position through coverage of concessions, plant closings, decertification drives, or other union-busting atrocities, the local paper is educating people who never really had to struggle for a union on what it might be like without one. And a strictly union viewpoint on these events helps members see how the media distorts the facts.

One feature story on union-busting listed eight "warning signs" of coming attacks. Members were urged to look for these signs at Ohio Bell and report them to their stewards.

Use Outside Resources

- Monthly editors' packets are distributed to locals by many national unions—usually a good source



Stewards Corner — February 1985

How to Start, Use and Build A Rank and File Newspaper

by Dave Newman

For a rank and file group organizing to win union reforms, a newsletter is one of its most valuable tools. Our group has published the *Bell Wringer* as an independent newspaper for almost six years. In that time, it has grown into a successful newspaper that reaches thousands of telephone workers on a regular basis.

A rank and file newspaper can overcome isolation by providing information that the employer or the union might not otherwise make available. It can encourage participation by serving as an open forum for union members to express their ideas, gripes, and suggestions. It can build solidarity by forging links across geographic and craft lines.

In locals where there is little union activity, it can offer members a chance to join with others who are working to build a better union. It can put pressure on the company, or on the union, by raising issues and proposing alternatives.

A newsletter can also make a rank and file group more "legitimate." The printed word acquires a seriousness all its own. It demonstrates commitment. If you're concerned enough to print it, most people will be concerned enough to read it.

All it takes to start a newsletter is two or three dedicated people. You should have general agreement as to why you want to put out a paper, who you want to reach, and what you hope to accomplish. One newsletter began when management refused to allow stewards to post grievance summaries on company bulletin boards. The stewards began xeroxing them and handing them out instead. That eventually developed into a full-blown newspaper.

of current events around the union, graphics, and updates on key legislation.

- Labor press workshops are held both by individual unions and by various regional labor press associations. They provide a chance to meet other editors and exchange fresh ideas.

- Look for other good newsletters and get on each others' mailing lists. I have found that this informal "code of exchange" among local union and rank and file paper editors (which includes and encourages mutual plagiarism!) is actually a growing information and communication network for the grassroots labor movement.

- Personal contact with more experienced labor editors is a must. Advice from another CWA editor here in Cleveland helped me get a good start with *Crosstalk*.

[Mary Baird is formerly the editor of *Crosstalk* and now the editor of *Riveting News*, the newsletter of Hard Hatted Women of Cleveland.]

What To Include

We have guidelines and a standard format for *Bell Wringer*. We try to touch base with the great variety of craft and clerical jobs in our local. One way we do this is by dedicating page 2 of each issue solely to brief reports (three to four sentences each) on what's happening in 15 or 20 different job locations. This page, titled "Here and There," is the one people often turn to first.

Each issue also contains a "Know Your Rights" column, which explains a provision of the contract, an article of the union by-laws or constitution, or a legal statute. We also include lots of graphics, and information on who we are, when and where we meet, and how to contact us.

Nuts and Bolts of Production

We start with a brainstorming session where people throw out ideas about what should go in the next issue. We draw up a list, set priorities, figure out how much can fit, and put aside some proposals for next time. People volunteer or are assigned to write each article on the list, to be in by a set deadline.

At that time we all read each other's articles to see if anyone has any violent objections to what someone else has written. One or two people take responsibility for typesetting and proofreading. Others "lay out" the issue—paste down the articles and graphics as they will appear as the final product. We print three pages, both sides, 8½ x 14 inches.

The issue is now ready to be sent to the printer. We use offset—an inexpensive photographic printing

method. When it comes back from the printer, we usually have a pizza party to collate and staple.

This entire process has tremendous leeway. Newsletters can be typewritten rather than typeset. They can be mimeographed or xeroxed instead of printed. It all depends on your human and financial resources. *Bell Wringer* is presently considering switching to newsprint to cut printing costs and eliminate collating time.

How To Get People Involved

A newsletter offers opportunities for different levels of involvement. We encourage people to call or send in information. We try to get them to write it down for us. If they're uneasy about that, we offer to help them write. (A good technique is to write down or tape their words as they tell them to you.) As a last resort, we will write up their story and have them approve it before publication.

Because the contents of *Bell Wringer* range from three-sentence items to short letters to the editor to longer articles, people can participate at whatever level they feel comfortable. We receive many unsolicited articles and letters. Our policy is to print them all, without editing or censorship, signed or unsigned.

We try to involve as many people as possible in *Bell Wringer* meetings, whether they're writing for the newsletter or not. Sometimes if we have an important article planned, we hold a group discussion beforehand so the author can get the benefit of everyone's ideas. We always discuss reactions from the rank and file to the previous issue.

Some union members choose to keep their distance while supporting us financially. *Bell Wringer* has a pledge system where people give from \$1 to \$10 a

month. Once or twice a year we take up collections. We also sell subscriptions and receive unsolicited donations.

Probably the activity in which the most people participate is distribution. The most effective way is to do it personally outside the work locations as people come in to start their shifts. That way everyone receives a copy directly and knows who it came from. It also gives them a full day to read it and discuss it with their co-workers. Some supporters hand it out only to their friends, and others distribute on the sly by leaving copies in lounges and locker rooms.

Legal Considerations

The NLRB has upheld employees' rights to distribute literature on company property in nonwork areas during nonwork time. We publish a reminder of these rights in every issue.

You also have a general right to post material on company bulletin boards if other workers have access to those boards to post personal notices, such as cars for sale.

It is important to guard against the possibility of libel suits from management or union officials. Check and doublecheck your information for accuracy. Offer to print retractions for any errors that do slip through.

If you find it slow going at first, and difficult to get people involved, remember that just *reading* a good rank and file newspaper may be more involvement than many people have ever had before. Keep them informed, keep stimulating and provoking, and you can start to turn your local around. Good luck!

[Dave Newman is a shop steward in CWA Local 1101. To request a copy of *Bell Wringer*, see Appendix E. See also Chapter 19 for more on the *Bell Wringer* group.]

Appendix D:

Strategic Planning Guides

SWOT Analysis: Assessing the Environment

Looking at the external environment, what are the threats facing your union? What are the opportunities?

	<u>Threats</u>	<u>Opportunities</u>
In the society/economy at large:		
In your industry:		
Locally:		
In your community:		

Review the lists and rank the four most important items in each list.

<u>Threats</u>	<u>Opportunities</u>
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.

SWOT Analysis: Assessing the Union

Given the environment the union finds itself in, what are the strengths and weaknesses of your local?

	<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Weaknesses</u>
In the society/economy at large:		
In your company:		
In your own workplace:		

Review the lists and rank the four most important items in each list.

Strengths

1.

2.

3.

4.

Weaknesses

1.

2.

3.

4.

Strategic Planning Guide

<u>Actions</u>	<u>Needed Support</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>	<u>Time Table</u>	<u>Required Resource</u>	<u>Success Criteria</u>	<u>Monitoring Mechanisms</u>	<u>Possible Modifications</u>
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1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Appendix E: Resources

I. Organizations

Following are organizations mentioned in this book and other useful organizations. We have not included local or international unions; to find them call Directory Assistance or the AFL-CIO's national headquarters, 202/637-5000. If the organization is mentioned in the book, the chapter number is given in parentheses at the end of the listing.

Alliance of Asian-Pacific American Labor, Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, PO Box 20630, Los Angeles, CA 90006. 213/381-5611. (14)

American Labor Education Center (ALEC). Writes, designs and produces printed and audio-visual materials for unions and other worker groups. 2000 P St. NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20036. 202/828-5170.

Association for Union Democracy (AUD). Helps union members enforce legal rights within their unions, including free speech, elections and contract votes. Women's Project assists women in obtaining equality on the job and in their unions. Bimonthly *Union Democracy Review*, \$10/year. 500 State St., Brooklyn, NY 11217. 718/855-6650.

Bell Wringer, 452A 17th St., Brooklyn, NY 11217. 212/562-1885. Newsletter \$5/year. (19)

Black Rank & File Exchange, c/o Labor Notes, see below. 313/592-8179. (16)

Black Workers for Justice. Publishes *Justice Speaks*, monthly, \$6/year. PO Box 1863, Rocky Mount, NC 27802. 919/977-8162. (17)

Center for Women's Economic Alternatives. Does health and safety work with women workers. PO Box 1033, Ahoskie, NC 27910. 919/332-4179.

Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, PO Box 73120, Washington, DC 20056. 202/429-1203. (16)

Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), 15 Union Sq., New York, NY 10003. 212/242-0700. (15)

Comité de Apoyo a los Trabajadores Agrícolas

(CATA—Farm Workers Support Committee), PO Box 458, Glassboro, NJ 08028. 609/881-2507. (14)

Committees on Occupational Safety and Health (COSH). To find the local COSH group nearest you, contact the Alice Hamilton Occupational Health Center, 410 7th St. SE, Washington, DC 20003. 202/543-0005. (4)

Concerned Minorities, PO Box 172001, Kansas City, KS 66117. (16)

Corporate Campaigns, Inc., 989 Sixth Ave., 8th floor, New York, NY 10018. 212/967-3180. (13)

The Data Center. Will do customized research on your company or on consultants. 464 19th St., Oakland, CA 94612. 415/835-4692. Sliding scale.

Gay and Lesbian Labor Activists Network, PO Box 1450, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130. For advice on starting a committee, contact Ginny Cutting, Gay and Lesbian Concerns Committee, SEIU Local 509, Box 307, 5 Howard Johnson's Plaza, Dorchester, MA 02125. 617/282-2509. (15)

Hard Hatted Women. Publishes *Riveting News*, \$6/year. PO Box 93384, Cleveland, OH 44101. 216/961-4449. (15)

Hell on Wheels. PO Box 1346, Bronx, NY 10471. (19)

Hispanic Labor Committee, 200 E. 116th St., 2nd floor, New York, NY 10029. 212/996-9222. (16)

IBM Workers United. Publishes *Resistor*. PO Box 634, Johnson City, NY 13790. 607/797-6911. (17)

Intercraft Association of Minnesota. Publishes *Straight Track*. 3948 Central Ave. NE, Minneapolis, MN 55421. 612/789-3302. (5 and 6)

Immigration Rights Advocacy, Training and Education Project (IRATE), 169 Massachusetts Ave., Boston, MA 02115. 617/266-0795. (14)

Labor/Community Strategy Center. Works on environment, other issues in Los Angeles, trains labor and community organizers. 14540 Haynes St., Suite 200, Van Nuys, CA 91411. 818/781-4800.

Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, 815 16th St. NW, Room 707, Washington, DC 20006. 202/347-4223. (16)

The Labor Institute. Helps unions design educational programs, slide shows, videos, and use education as an organizing tool. 853 Broadway, Room 2014, New York, NY 10003. 212/674-3322.

Labor Library, PO Box 209, Boonville, IN 47601. (6)

Labor Notes/Labor Education and Research Project. Publishers of this book and many others (see ad at back of book). Organizes schools on team concept and workplace strategies, provides speakers and workshop leaders on labor topics, and holds a biennial conference for all labor activists. Publishes *Labor Notes*, monthly magazine with news and analysis of the labor movement not available elsewhere. \$10/year. 7435 Michigan Ave., Detroit, MI 48210. 313/842-6262.

Midwest Center for Labor Research. Assistance in bargaining, anti-shutdown campaigns, industry analysis, and strengthening union in employee participation programs. Publishes *Labor Research Review*, twice-yearly magazine on labor strategies and debates. \$13/year. 3411 W. Diversey Ave., #10, Chicago, IL 60647. 312/278-5418.

La Mujer Obrera, c/o Centro Obrero, Inc., PO Box 3975, El Paso, TX 79923. 915/533-9710. (17)

National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (a federal agency). To get a Health Hazard Evaluation of your workplace, contact NIOSH, Robert A Taft Laboratory, 4676 Columbia Parkway, Mail Stop R-11, Cincinnati, OH 45226. 513/841-4386. An HHE may be requested by an employer, a union or any three workers. (4)

New African Voices Alliance, 403 N. 54th St., Philadelphia, PA 19139. 215/472-4024. (7)

New Directions Movement. Reform group within the United Auto Workers. Publishes *Voice of New Directions*. PO Box 6876, St. Louis, MO 63144. 314/531-2900. (19)

9to5, National Association of Working Women, 614 Superior Ave. NW, Cleveland, OH 44113. 216/566-9308. (17)

Peacenet, 3228 Sacramento St., San Francisco, CA 94115. 415/923-0900. (6)

Philadelphia Project on Occupational Safety and Health (PHILAPOSH), 3001 Walnut St., Philadelphia, PA 19104. 215/386-7000. (4)

Southerners for Economic Justice, PO Box 240, Durham, NC 27702. 919/683-1361.

Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU). Publishes *Convoy-Dispatch*, \$30/year. PO Box 10128, Detroit, MI 48210. 313/842-2600. (6, 19)

Tompkins-Cortland Labor Coalition. Publishes *The Working Press*, \$5/year. 109 W. State St., Ithaca, NY 14850. 607/277-5670. (6)

Tradeswomen, Inc. National membership organization. Publishes *Tradeswomen* quarterly magazine, \$15/year. PO Box 40664, San Francisco, CA 94140. 415/821-7334.

Tri-State Conference on Steel. 300 Saline St., Pittsburgh, PA 15207. 412/421-1980. (22)

Women's Institute for Leadership Development (WILD). Holds weekend workshops for women. WILD, c/o SEIU Local 925, 145 Tremont St., Room 402, Boston, MA 02111. 617/482-7875.

Women on the Job. 382 Main St., Port Washington, NY 11050. 516/883-1691. (15)

Workers' Education Local 189. National organization of labor educators. 44 Hollingsworth St., Lynn, MA 01902. 617/599-7791.

Workers Solidarity Club of Youngstown, 843 Brookfield, Youngstown, OH 44512. (6)

International

American Friends Service Committee's Mexico-U.S. Border Program and AFSC's Women and Global Corporations Project. The latter publishes a quarterly bulletin. 1501 Cherry St., Philadelphia, PA 19102. 215/241-7129 and 241-7181.

Asia Monitor Resource Center. Publishes information on labor movements in Asia. 444 Nathan Rd., 8-B, Kowloon, Hong Kong.

Labor Coalition on Central America. Network of local organizations. Publishes *Labor Action: You, Your Union and Central America*, \$10/year. PO Box 28014, Oakland, CA 94604. 415/272-9951.

Labor Committee Against Apartheid. Publishes *Labor Against Apartheid*, \$5/year, c/o Vicki Williams, 15 Union Sq., New York, NY 10003. 212/242-0700. Committee is at CWA Local 1180, 6 Harrison St., New York, NY 10013. 718/768-1756.

Mexico-US Labor Project, c/o ALEC (see above). Promotes contacts between Mexican and U.S. unionists.

Mujer a Mujer. Promotes contacts between Mexican and U.S. women. A.P. 24-553, Col. Roma, C.P. 06700, Mexico, D.F., Mexico. 011-52-5-207-0834.

National Labor Committee in Support of Democracy and Human Rights in El Salvador, 15 Union Sq., New York, NY 10003. 212/242-0700. (22)

Philippine Workers Support Committee, PO Box 11208, Moilili Station, Honolulu, HI 96828. 808/595-7362.

Transnationals Information Exchange (TIE), Paulus Potterstraat 20, 1071 DA Amsterdam, The Netherlands. 020 766 724. (22)

II. Manuals

This sampling of books and pamphlets roughly follows the topics in this book. We have not included books which are mainly informational—such as the health hazards of VDT's or the dangers of labor-management participation programs. Rather we have listed only those which are intended to help you *organize*. In some cases we have included a book which is not a manual but which, because it tells the story of a particular struggle so concretely, can be used that way.

Unless otherwise indicated, prices include postage. If no address is listed, see the organization's name in the preceding "Organizations" section.

Basics of Organizing and Shop Floor Tactics

Steward's Manual. Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU). \$4.

TDU Organizers' Manual. Fundraising, newsletters, recruitment, forming a TDU chapter. TDU. \$15.

Getting the Most from Your Grievance Procedure. TDU. \$1.

The Legal Rights of Union Stewards by Robert M. Schwartz. Work Rights Press, Suite 133, 310 Franklin St., Boston, MA 02110. \$9.95.

Numbers That Count: A Manual on Internal Organizing by Virginia Diamond. AFL-CIO Department of Organization and Field Services, 815 16th St. NW, Washington, DC 20006. \$1.50.

Steward Update. Newsletter to improve stewards' skills (six/year). Minimum order 20 copies. \$227/year. For free sample, contact Union Communication Services, 1633 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20009. 800/321-2545.

Health and Safety

"Organizing for Health & Safety." Midwest Center. \$8.

"Don't Do It Alone: Group Organizing Tips that Protect Your Job, Build Solidarity and Help Stop Health and Safety Hazards." SEMCOSH, 2727 Second Ave., Detroit, MI 48201. 313/961-3345.

Labor-Management Participation

Inside the Circle: A Union Guide to Quality of Work Life by Mike Parker. A Labor Notes book. \$10 plus \$2 postage.

Choosing Sides: Unions and the Team Concept by Mike Parker and Jane Slaughter. A Labor Notes book. \$15 plus \$2 postage.

Community Coalitions

Taking on General Motors: A Case Study of the UAW Campaign to Keep GM Van Nuys Open by Eric Mann. Labor Distributors, 14540 Haynes St., Suite 200, Van Nuys, CA 91411. 818/781-4800. \$20.

The Struggle to Save Morse Cutting Tool: A Successful Community Campaign by Barbara Doherty. Labor Education Center, Southeastern Massachusetts University, North Dartmouth, MA 02747. \$2.

Building Bridges: The Emerging Grassroots Coalition of Labor and the Community by Jeremy Brecher and Tim Costello. Monthly Review Press, 122 W. 27th St., New York, NY 10001. \$12 plus \$2 postage.

Contract Campaigns and Strikes

Contract Campaign Manual. Organizing Dept., Service Employees International Union, 1313 L St. NW, Washington, DC 20005. 202/898-3200. \$15.

Concessions and How To Beat Them by Jane Slaughter. A Labor Notes book. \$4.50 plus \$1.50 postage.

Ain't No Stopping Us Now. A contract campaign manual for the 1990 postal negotiations. Gene Bruskin, Mail Handlers Union, PO Box 34473, Washington, DC 20077. 202/833-9095. \$6.

Preparing for and Conducting a Strike. United Electrical Workers, 2400 Oliver Bldg., 535 Smithfield St., Pittsburgh, PA 15222. 412/471-8919. \$4.75.

On Strike for Respect: The Clerical & Technical Workers'

Strike at Yale University (1984-85) by Toni Gilpin, Gary Isaac, Dan Letwin, and Jack McKivigan. Charles H. Kerr Publishing Co., 1740 W. Greenleaf Ave., Chicago, IL 60626. \$5.95 plus \$1 postage. (20)

Mobilizing for the 90's. CWA Education Dept., 1925 K St. NW, Washington, DC 20006. 202/728-2300. \$4.

Holding the Line in '89: Lessons of the NYNEX Strike. Labor Resource Center, 186 South St., 4th Floor, Boston, MA 02111. 617/391-3866. \$6. (9)

Bargaining Guides

Bargaining for Our Families: A Union Member's Guide. Includes childcare, flexible work policies, reproductive health concerns, childcare workers, eldercare, new parents' benefits. CLUW.

Bargaining on Women's Issues and Family Concerns. ACTWU, Attn: Desma Holcomb, 15 Union Square, New York, NY 10003. 212/242-0700, ext. 208. Free.

Plant Closings and Technological Change: A Guide for Union Negotiators by Anne Lawrence and Paul Chown. Sample and model language on restrictions on management's rights, "red circle" rates, early retirement. Institute of Industrial Relations, University of California, 2521 Channing Way, Berkeley, CA 94720. Attn: Labor Center. 415/642-0323. \$6. Make checks to "U.C. Regents."

Workplace Health and Safety: A Guide to Collective Bargaining. Same address as previous entry, Attn: LOHP. 415/642-5507. \$8.

Privatization and Contracting Out. Midwest Center. \$7.

Inside Strategies

Creative Persistent Resistance (CPR): A Primer for Unions Taking the Strike Inside by Michael Eisenscher. 207 Edinburgh, San Francisco, CA 94112. 415/469-7235. \$4.

The Inside Game. AFL-CIO Industrial Union Dept., 815 16th St. NW, Washington, DC 20006. Order on union letterhead. \$5.

Corporate Campaigns

Developing New Tactics: Winning with Coordinated Corporate Campaigns. AFL-CIO Industrial Union Dept., see previous entry. \$2.50.

Immigrants

Workplace Rights for Immigrant Workers by Enid Eckstein and Robert Schwartz. In English, Spanish and Haitian Creole. IRATE. \$2.

Women

Working for Pay Equity: A Blueprint for Local Community Action. Women on the Job. \$15.

Bargaining for Pay Equity: A Strategy Manual. National Committee on Pay Equity, 1201 16th St. NW, Washington, DC 20036. 202/822-7304. \$9.

On the Job Sexual Harassment: What the Union Can Do. AFSCME Women's Dept., 1625 L St. NW, Washington, DC 20036. 202/452-4800. Free.

Feminizing Unions. Articles on a women's committee,

fighting for parental leave, a nurses' strike. Midwest Center. \$7.

The Working Woman's Guide to Office Survival by Ellen Cassedy and Karen Nussbaum. 9to5. \$5 plus \$3 postage.

Three guides to starting a tradeswomen support group:

Resource sheet from Hard Hatted Women.

Spring 1989 newsletter of Chicago Women in the Trades, 37 S. Ashland, Chicago, IL 60607.

May-June 1989 issue of *Inroads*, Philadelphia Women in Non-Traditional Work, TOP/WIN, PO Box 5904, Philadelphia, PA 19137.

Painting Our Way to a Better Future. A coloring book about women in nontraditional jobs. Hard Hatted Women. \$6.95 plus \$1.25 postage.

Lesbian and Gay Rights

Pride at Work: Organizing for Lesbian and Gay Rights in Unions by Miriam Frank and Desma Holcomb. Lesbian and Gay Labor Network, P.O. Box 1159, Peter Stuyvesant Station, New York, NY 10009. \$5 plus \$1 postage.

Organizing the Unorganized

UMWA Organizing Manual. Organizing Dept., United Mine Workers, 900 15th St. NW, Washington, DC 20005. 202/842-7200. \$10.

On Strike for Respect. See under Contract Campaigns.

Union Elections and Democracy

How To Get an Honest Union Election. Association for Union Democracy (AUD). \$3.

Democratic Rights for Union Members: A Guide to Internal Union Democracy by Herman Benson. AUD. \$6 plus \$1 postage.

Strategic Planning

A Hip Pocket Guide to Planning and Evaluation by Dorothy Craig. University Associates, 8517 Production Ave., San Diego, CA 92121. 619/578-5900, ext. 221. \$14.95 plus \$2.50 postage.

Political Action

UE Political Action Primer. United Electrical Workers, see address under Contract Campaigns. \$2.50.

Union Newspapers

How To Do Leaflets, Newsletters and Newspapers by Nancy Brigham. UAW LUPA, 8000 Jefferson Ave., Detroit, MI 48214. \$5.95.

Union News: A Basic Newsletter Course for Union Editors and Activists. Canadian Auto Workers, Education Dept., 205 Placer Ct., North York, Willowdale, Ontario M2H 3H9. 416/497-4110. \$8.

Union Communication Services. Monthly graphics packet of 30-40 cartoons, headings, illustrations. \$195/year. Monthly news service—brief articles and features, cartoons. \$150/year. See above under Basics.

International

Solidarity Across Borders. Midwest Center. \$7.

III. Periodicals

See also "Organizations" above for rank and file and other publications.

Dollars and Sense. Monthly review of economic issues, written in down-to-earth language. Economic Affairs Bureau, One Summer St., Somerville, MA 02143. 617/628-8411. \$19.50/year.

Economic Notes. Bimonthly newsletter on economic questions for unionists. Labor Research Association, 80 E. 11th St., Suite 634, New York, NY 10003. \$30/year.

Hard Hat News, PO Box 4010, Rockefeller Station, New York, NY 10185. \$10/year. (6)

Hard Hat Times, PO Box 881281, San Francisco, CA 94188. Working steady—\$50; breaking even—\$20; unemployed—\$10. (6)

International Labour Reports. Bimonthly on international labor news and trends. PO Box 5036, Berkeley, CA 94705. \$28.

Labor Notes. "Putting the movement back in the labor movement" since 1979. \$10/year. 7435 Michigan Ave., Detroit, MI 48210. 313/842-6262.

The Labor Page. Bimonthly covering the Boston area. Good example of a citywide labor newspaper. 335 Lamartine St., Jamaica Plain, MA 02130. 617/524-3541. \$8/year.

The Other Side of Mexico. Bimonthly news of Mexico's popular movements. Equipo Pueblo, A.P. 27-467, 06760 Mexico, D.F., Mexico. Checks to Carlos A. Heredia/Equipo Pueblo. \$10.

Rethinking Schools, 1001 E. Keefe Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53212. 414/964-9646. \$10/year. (16)

South African Labour Bulletin, PO Box 3851, Johannesburg, 2000 South Africa. 011/337-8511. \$50 individuals, \$58 institutions.

IV. More on Organizations or Struggles in this Book

Rank and File Rebellion: Teamsters for a Democratic Union by Dan La Botz. Verso, New York, 1990. Order from Labor Notes. \$18.95 plus \$2 postage. (6, 19)

On Strike at Hormel: The Struggle for a Democratic Labor Movement by Hardy Green. Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1990. \$29.95. (13)

The Long Distance Feeling: A History of the Telecommunications Workers Union by Elaine Bernard. New Star Books, Vancouver, 1982. (11)

Labor At the Ballot Box: The Massachusetts Prevailing Wage Campaign of 1988 by Mark Erlich. Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1990. (7)

"Thunder in the Coal Fields," a supplement to the *Roanoke Times and World News*. About the Pittston strike. PO Box 2491, Roanoke, VA 24010, Attn: Cashier's Office. 800/627-2767. \$2.50. (11, 22)

"The History of the Boston School Bus Drivers" by Gene Bruskin, 12 Glade Ave., Jamaica Plain, MA 02130. \$1. (10)

V. Background Books

- An Injury to All: The Decline of American Unionism* by Kim Moody. Analysis of the rise and fall of U.S. unions from World War II through the 1980's. Verso, New York, 1988. Order from Labor Notes. \$15 plus \$2 postage.
- The Global Factory: Analysis and Action for a New Economic Era* by Rachael Kamel. The Maquiladora Project, American Friends Service Committee, 1501 Cherry St., Philadelphia, PA 19102. 215/241-7134. \$7.50.
- The Great U-Turn: Corporate Restructuring and the Polarizing of America* by Bennett Harrison and Barry Bluestone. Basic Books, New York, 1988.
- The Search for Job Security: UAW Bargaining in 1990* by Mike Parker and Jane Slaughter. The pitfalls of cooperative "job security" programs. 17 pages. Labor Notes. \$1.
- The Electronic Sweatshop: How Computers Are Transforming the Office of the Future into the Factory of the Past* by Barbara Garson. Simon and Schuster, New York, 1988.
- Labor in America: A History* by Foster Rhea Dulles and Melvyn Dubofsky. Harlan Davidson, Inc., Arlington Heights, Illinois, 1984.
- Workers' Control in America* by David Montgomery. A history of the struggle between workers and management over control of the work process. Cambridge University Press, London, 1979.
- Teamster Rebellion*. Story of the Minneapolis Teamsters organizing drive and strikes of 1934. Pathfinder Books, New York, 1972.
- Organized Labor and the Black Worker: 1616-1973* by Philip S. Foner. International Publishers, New York, 1976.
- Black Labor and the American Legal System* by Herbert Hill. University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1977.
- We Were There: The Story of Working Women in America* by Barbara Wertheimer. A history. Pantheon Books, New York, 1976.
- Outlaws in the Promised Land: Mexican Immigrant Workers and America's Future* by James D. Cockcroft. Grove Press, New York, 1986.
- The Power in Our Hands* by William Bigelow and Norman Diamond. A curriculum on the history of work and workers in the U.S. Monthly Review Press, 122 W. 27th St., New York, NY 10001. Teacher's edition \$15, student edition \$5, both plus \$2 postage.
- Tunnel Vision: Labor, the World Economy, and Central America* by Daniel Cantor and Juliet Schor. Why U.S. labor needs a new foreign policy. South End Press, 116 St. Botolph St., Boston, MA 02115. \$5.
- Transnational Corporations and Labor: A Directory of Resources* by Thomas Fenton and Mary Heffron. Third World Resources, 464 19th St., Oakland, CA 94612. 415/835-4692.

VI. Videos

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