

14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
June 16, 1975

TO NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dear Comrades,

The National Coordinating Committee (NCC) of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) met in Houston, Texas, on May 31 and June 1.

Present were 85 voting delegates and 25 observers. Any CLUW member can attend as an observer, but the NCC meetings are closed to all non-CLUW members, including press.

We estimate that there were about ten members of the October League (OL) present, about eight of whom were voting delegates; eight to ten members of International Socialists (IS); and half a dozen CP members.

We had a fraction of eleven, six of whom were voting delegates.

The main political question facing the NCC was that of formulating CLUW's position on the current controversy in the labor movement regarding the discriminatory layoffs and seniority.

There were three resolutions on this question before the NCC. One, presented by Connie Kopelov of Amalgamated Clothing Workers in New York, represented the thinking of Olga Madar, president of CLUW. The second resolution was submitted by the Madison-Janesville, Wisconsin CLUW and represented the thinking of IS. The third was submitted by Jean Tussey of the ITU. (All three resolutions are attached. Also, see Militant article of June 20 regarding these resolutions.)

With one exception, our fraction agreed that the Tussey resolution expressed the correct position on this issue. Debbie Leonard felt that the Tussey resolution was incorrect. Her disagreements are outlined in a note to me from her and in a resolution that she gave to me for my information. The note and resolution are attached, with her permission.

It was agreed, of course, that disagreements on this question should be taken up during the preconvention discussion.

A panel discussion was held with representatives of the UAW, Amalgamated Clothing Workers, IUE, and EEOC presenting different approaches to affirmative action and seniority. Following the panel, the resolutions were introduced, discussed, and voted upon.

Kopelov's resolution was introduced first, followed by the Madison-Janesville resolution. These were debated against

each other. The discussion was chaotic and unruly, primarily due to the disruptive and irresponsible behavior of the October League who think that by yelling about "points of personal privilege" and challenging the chair they are "exposing the labor bureaucracy."

Kopelov's resolution received 42 votes and the Madison-Janesville resolution received 21 votes, with both IS and OL voting for it.

Next the resolution by Jean Tussey was introduced. The discussion on this resolution was much more serious, although little time was left for this point on the agenda. The Tussey resolution received 33 votes, with 3 abstentions, and with both IS and the OL also voting for it. Madar maintained her 42 votes throughout the voting.

With only 9 votes difference between the two major resolutions, several abstentions, and half a dozen people not voting, the issue has clearly not been definitively decided within the CLUW leadership, and much less so within the ranks of CLUW.

Between now and the CLUW convention the CLUW chapters will want to educate both CLUW members and broader layers of the union movement around this issue.

The NCC called for an open convention to be held in the Midwest the first week of December 1975. An open convention means that all CLUW members are invited with voice and vote. An open convention, as opposed to a delegated one, will provide the best forum for discussion and democratic decision making. It will also give the CLUW chapters the opportunity to recruit as many members as possible and have a big turnout for the convention.

The NCC also passed resolutions in support of the undocumented workers and calling for a cessation of the deportations, and in support of the farm workers organizing in the Rio Grande Valley in Texas.

This is for the information of National Committee members only.

Comradely,



Linda Jenness
National Office

[introduced by Jean Tussey]

Resolution on Discriminatory Layoffs

- Whereas: Women and minority workers have, during the past several years, made important breakthroughs toward equalizing job opportunities in hiring, upgrading, training and apprenticeship programs; and
- Whereas: The struggles of women and minorities have wrung concessions from the federal government and employers in the form of affirmative action programs; and
- Whereas: These gains have been a major breakthrough for labor in restricting the employers' ability to divide working people; and
- Whereas: The current economic crisis has brought massive layoffs, adversely and disproportionately affecting newly hired women and minorities who recently won jobs in industry under affirmative action programs; and
- Whereas: These massive layoffs threaten to wipe-out the gains of the women's, civil rights, and labor movements against discriminatory hiring, employment, apprenticeship and upgrading practices; therefore, be it
- Resolved: That the Coalition of Labor Union Women oppose in every way possible any reduction through layoffs in the proportionate number of women and minority workers hired under affirmative action programs, wherever layoffs occur, and be it further
- Resolved: That wherever a seniority system is used to perpetuate the discriminatory hiring, firing, and employment practices of an employer by allowing a reduction in the percentage of women and minority workers gained through affirmative action struggles, CLUW stands for altering or amending that seniority system so as to protect these gains, and be it further
- Resolved: That we urge all unions to endorse our position and support the continuing struggle against discriminatory hiring, firing, and employment practices and for the equal rights of women and minority workers who have been and are excluded from jobs because of race and sex.

[introduced by Connie Kopelov]

Affirmative Action and Seniority

The Coalition of Labor Union Women, in its statement of purpose, adopted at its founding, agreed upon the following basic beliefs about affirmative action:

*Employers continue to profit by dividing workers on sexual, racial and age lines. This encourages the segregation of job classifications and results in wage and benefit losses to women.

*The power of unions must increasingly be brought to bear through collective bargaining to correct these inequities. The coalition will seek to encourage women, through their unions to recognize and take positive action against job discrimination in hiring, promotion, classification and other aspects of work.

*We must become more knowledgeable of the specifics of collective bargaining, and of contract clauses and work place practices that discriminate against us. We must be more informed about what is and can be done within the labor movement to correct these situations.

In the 15 months since these principles were enunciated, the national economy has deteriorated, and women, particularly non-unionized women, have been pushed back many of the steps they won toward equality in the work place. Accordingly, the Coalition of Labor Union Women adopts the following resolution in three parts:

1. In regard to employers, RESOLVED

That CLUW pledges itself to renewed efforts to organize unorganized women, noting that unionized women suffer proportionately less in layoffs and noting that a union contract provides almost the only safeguard against capricious or selective layoffs, which most harm women and minority group members:

That CLUW pledges itself to provide information to women workers about their job rights under Title VII equal employment opportunity guidelines, the Equal Pay Act and pertinent executive orders;

That CLUW will support efforts to see that employers provide training and retraining programs to allow women to move into non-traditional jobs; to promote job posting and job bidding in ways that open new fields to women and minority group members;

That CLUW will continue its exploration of ways to promote full employment and to place the cost of discrimination upon the employer rather than the worker, and will press for legislative action where appropriate to bring governmental or tax support into areas under the threat of layoffs or closures.

2. In regard to our unions, RESOLVED

That CLUW and its members will take vigilant action in their unions to see that seniority for all purposes is measured on the widest possible base in any work place, thereby safeguarding workers against layoffs that run counter to seniority:

That CLUW members will seek to improve the seniority system in their unions and eliminate those aspects that have not served women and minority workers fairly;

That CLUW members will monitor recall and rehiring actions in their unions closely to see that contract clauses are carried out;

That where unions have hiring halls or apprentice programs, CLUW members will insist that their union's control over hiring does not work to the detriment of those suffering the effects of long discrimination;

That CLUW and all its members will press our unions to put their own houses in order with regard to discrimination against women and minorities wherever it exists and will urge that the unions themselves:

- a. Evaluate all contracts and eliminate provisions and practices that permit discrimination;
- b. Bargain for affirmative action programs and then monitor the results;
- c. Establish procedures under the union constitutions for the redress of sex-discrimination problems within the rank and file or the union structure, and
- d. Undertake affirmative action hiring and training in the union headquarters.

3. With regard to all women unionists, RESOLVED

That CLUW will assist women trade unionists to pursue through local union procedures any charges of discrimination, and if no satisfactory response is offered by the local union, it will assist such women to pursue methods outlined in the union's constitution for redress. To secure information about such procedures, the CLUW chapter will review the union's constitution and turn to the N.C.C. representative from the union concerned.

Proposed MADISON-JANESVILLE, WISCONSIN CLUW Position on Seniority and Layoffs, May, 1975.

WHEREAS the issues of affirmative action and seniority have been erroneously made to appear as divisive issues among working people; and

WHEREAS federal, state, and local affirmative action legislation has improved the position of women and minority workers in industry and other previously "white" and "male" jobs; and

WHEREAS the recent devastating layoffs of workers all over the country have hit women and minority workers particularly hard, in many cases totally wiping out the gains of the past ten years; and

WHEREAS the efforts of trade unions must be to save the jobs of all workers, and in particular the jobs of those who have suffered past discrimination;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Coalition of Labor Union Women supports the following position on layoffs and seniority:

1. CLUW initiate resistance to layoffs and encourage unions to initiate resistance to layoffs.

2. Every effort be made to negotiate six month prior notification of layoff clauses in all union contracts.

3. Seniority is a necessary and important means of defense for all working people. The winning of seniority for promotions and layoffs was a victory by the unions over the arbitrary practices of the employers. It would be a tragic mistake for the unions to allow the government or the employers to destroy the principle of seniority. This makes it all the more important that the unions develop a solution of their own that protects both higher seniority workers and workers who have faced discrimination in the past.

4. When layoffs occur, the unions should stand on the notion that it is the companies who made the crisis and it is they who should pay the price, not women, black and minority group workers. The union should demand that these workers receive compensatory treatment in one or more of the following ways:

- a. All workers work a short week and "share the work," with those who lose a day receiving full work week benefits.
- b. Layoffs are rotated with everyone working one week on and one week off with no loss of pay.
- c. The proportion of women/minority workers is maintained, without laying off any men to retain the women and minority workers.

- d. Voluntary layoffs by higher seniority workers if they are eligible for SUB benefits.
- e. Pay laid off workers what they would have made if they had not been laid off, and allow them to accrue seniority.

5. The above principle of compensatory treatment is an old trade union principle. What is a pension, but compensation for old age? When a company has to pay workers a pension, they are paying that worker for doing nothing -- nothing from their point of view, that is. That is why employers never did want to grant pensions. The unions had to fight for them. The unions must fight for the oppressed as they fought for the retired worker.

PROPOSAL ON UNDOCUMENTED WORKERS FOR CONSIDERATION BY NCC

WHEREAS there are attempts as unemployment continues to rise to blame scapegoats for the economic crisis; and

WHEREAS chief among the victims are the noncitizen, undocumented workers as was graphically illustrated in the Immigration Department's seizure, detention, and deportation of 500 Mexican workers (predominantly women) in one Los Angeles factory on May 16; and

WHEREAS whenever employers are allowed to stigmatize a section of working people as pariahs ("aliens"), as expendable, as undeserving of equal rights, it weakens the labor movement as a whole and helps depress wages; and

WHEREAS the Coalition of Labor Union Women stands in support of minority women -- especially those most easily victimized by their non-union status -- and rejects the view that workers are to blame and must pay for the economic crisis;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT CLUW calls for the cessation of the inhumane activity of deportation and calls for solidarity with this section of the work force.

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run off by union labor

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PROPOSAL ON FARMWORKERS ORGANIZING DRIVE IN THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY

WHEREAS the farmworkers have opened an organizing drive in the Rio Grande Valley of S. Texas; and

WHEREAS the largely immigrant Mexican workers are currently receiving wages averaging \$1.60/hour and suffer from dangerous and inhumane working conditions; and

WHEREAS these workers are under violent attack by the growers as illustrated by the shooting of 11 workers Monday by rancher Chester Miller; and

WHEREAS a successful organizing drive in the valley would strengthen the union movement in Texas and the U.S. by eliminating the depressing effect on all working people of such low wages;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT CLUW:

1. Support and encourage the UFW organizing drive in the Rio Grande Valley;
2. Demand the lifting of the anti-labor injunctions banning picketing at La Casita Farms, El Tejana Ranch and Griffin and Frand Farms;
4. Send a telegram to the organizing center to that effect.
UFWA, Rt. 1 Box 149B
Alamo, Texas 78516

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May 29, 1975

Dear Linda,

I have given much thought to the alternative resolution I'm submitting, but still apologize for not getting it together sooner. I am convinced that there is no short-cut approach to this question and that the role of militant women, Black and Chicano and Puerto Rican unionists is to begin the difficult task of building a left-wing alternative within the working class, and its organized form, the union movement, to the sell-out program of the bureaucracy. I cannot support preferential layoffs or the concept that one layoff is better or less bad than another layoff. Of course, preferential hiring is something we should fight for all out. There are many well-thought out arguments I would like to make in support of the resolution I am submitting; unfortunately, your schedule does not permit a thorough fraction meeting, or even a meeting between you and me, prior to such a meeting. So I reluctantly submit this in absentia.

I have suggested to the head of the Houston CLU! fraction, Jill Fein, that the fraction draft a resolution on the attacks on the farmworkers in West Texas and circulate it among the leadership and other members of Houston CLU! Friday night so that it can be presented by Houston CLUW in light of the importance of the recent events.

Comradely,

s/ Debby Leonard

P.S. Please excuse numerous typos; have been very distracted by phone, etc., tonite.

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Whereas: Women and minority workers have, during the past several years, made important breakthroughs toward equalizing job opportunities in hiring, upgrading, training and apprenticeship programs; and

Whereas: The struggles of women and minorities have wrung concessions from the federal government and employers in the form of affirmative action programs; and

Whereas: In this period of economic depression and mounting layoffs in the public and private sectors, women and minority workers are losing these gains won in a period of relative prosperity because the federal government and large corporations are not meeting the demand for full employment;

Whereas: The Coalition of Labor Union Women, while fighting for the particular needs of women and minority workers who are paying a high price for generations of discrimination on the job, is concerned that the government and big business not be successful in pitting worker against worker;

Whereas: CLUW insists that it is illegal to layoff workers hired under affirmative action programs and also illegal to violate union contracts by overstepping seniority agreements;

Whereas: CLUW maintains that all layoffs are bad; no layoff is less bad than another layoff;

Whereas: CLUW holds big business and the federal government responsible for the present economic depression, which workers are paying the price for:

Resolved: That the problems of job discrimination, layoffs and unorganized workers in this period of economic depression must be confronted by and within the union movement, as the organized expression of workers' solidarity and defense;

Resolved: That CLUW insists that the union movement demand a shorter work week with no reduction in pay and total elimination of overtime to avoid layoffs, and that the union movement enforce these demands with any action necessary and without consideration of seniority in any plant facing layoffs;

Resolved: That CLUW calls on the union movement to demand extensive public works projects at union wages to provide jobs for all unemployed workers;

Resolved: That CLUW demands that the defense budget be cut to provide finances for the above;

And Furthermore, Whereas: More than 8 million working people in this country are presently unemployed -- including tens of thousands of union members;

Resolved: That the union movement organize unemployed workers in a fight for public works programs at union wages and jobs for all;

And further, Whereas: The Democrat and Republican parties have given no substantial response to the demands of workers, especially women and minorities;

Resolved: That CLUW project supporting women unionists, running on the CLUW program, as independent labor candidates for public office.

And Finally Be It Resolved: That the National Coordinating Committee of CLUW authorize the CLUW National Steering Committee to seek a meeting with the International AFL-CIO Executive Board, and meetings with the National UAW and Teamster leaderships, to issue a call for a national union conference to deal with unemployment, layoffs and depression, especially as it affects women and minority workers; And that the National CLUW send this resolution to all national unions and that local CLUW chapters and CLUW members raise these demands in their local unions.