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New York, N.Y. 10014
November 16, 1975

To Organizers and CLUW Work Directors

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed for your information are copies of two articles about the upcoming CLUW convention. One is from the November 1975 The Call, published by the October League. The other is from the November 7, 1975 Workers Power, published by the International Socialists.

The articles explain what these two opponent groups plan to focus on at the convention at this stage. You will be informed of the outcome of any discussions we are able to have with them about cooperation at the convention. If you hold discussions with them, or any other opponents in your area, please let me know the results.

Comradely,

Linda Jenness
Linda Jenness
CLUW Work Director

CLUW CALLS SECOND NATIONAL CONVENTION

On December 6th and 7th, the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) will hold its second annual convention in Detroit. Initiated over one and a half years ago by top women labor officials, CLUW has been an important organization through which the struggle to bring women into the growing rank-and-file movements in the trade unions has developed. It has also served as an arena for exposing the reactionary policies of the trade union leadership, men and women alike.

Similar to last year's convention, the Detroit meeting will reflect the sharp struggle between the attempts of the union bureaucrats to make CLUW a paper organization firmly under their control and the attempts of the rank-and-file women to build CLUW as a fighting, militant organization that stands up for the rights of women and minorities and takes a fighting stand against the effects of the current economic crisis.

Struggle in Local Chapters

For the last year, this struggle has been reflected in the local CLUW chapters which were built following last year's convention. One example was the attempt by Olga Madar, CLUW national president and former UAW vice-president, to suspend two of the most active CLUW chapters in the country -- Boston and Atlanta. Staging a vicious red-baiting campaign against these chapters, Madar attempted to cover up her own betrayal of the very issues these chapters were fighting for! In the case of Boston, the local CLUW chapter there had staged a militant demonstration against the deportation of undocumented workers, mainly women. In Atlanta CLUW had been in the forefront of the fight-back movement there, demanding "Jobs or Income," "Jobs Not War," and an end to discrimination in the unemployment system.

This struggle is bound to come to a head at the upcoming convention. The CLUW leadership, headed by Madar, is billing the convention as a "Constitutional Convention" that will ratify CLUW's constitution and establish a list of rules and regulations governing the activities of all CLUW chapters.

The bureaucrats' intention is to establish a complicated list of procedures and regulations that will effectively disarm CLUW from undertaking any activities without the express permission of the AFL-CIO leadership, and turn it into an organization that will act as a rubber-stamp for the AFL-CIO reactionary policies.

Strengthen Outreach

Concretely, the rank-and-file in CLUW is demanding that non-union working women be allowed membership in CLUW to strengthen outreach among the millions of unorganized women workers, including the overwhelming majority of minority women workers. They are also demanding that the National Coordinating Committee (the national leading body of CLUW) be based primarily on chapter representation

to allow for larger numbers of rank-and-file women from the chapters to participate in decision-making. This is in opposition to the bureaucrats' insistence that only women already organized in unions be allowed membership, and that the NCC be based solely on union representation, which they believe will tie it closer to the international union structure.

Besides questions of structure, the struggle against the bureaucrats in CLUW will also emerge, as it did last year, on their failure to link CLUW closely to the movements against national discrimination. In the last year several resolutions have been passed opposing the reactionary pro-segregationist movement and supporting the democratic rights of minorities in the busing struggle in Boston and elsewhere, and opposing the deportations of undocumented workers. However, the CLUW leadership has not only ignored these resolutions, but has distorted them and condemned CLUW chapters which have attempted to put them into action.

Finally, the basic stand that CLUW is taking in response to the effects of the current economic crisis will be called into question on the convention floor. At the April 26th demonstration last spring in Washington, where thousands of rank-and-file workers expressed their dissatisfaction with the current union leadership's "solutions" to the crisis, Madar and Co. joined hands with Meany, Abel and Woodcock in condemning the rank-and-file movements and calling on the workers to "tighten their belts."

The CLUW rank-and-file has heard enough of these excuses. Increasing sentiment among the CLUW chapters is calling on the organization to take up a comprehensive program to counter the effects of the crisis, and particularly, the special effects on women. Besides a concerted drive for "Jobs Not War" and adequate unemployment compensation, there is also strong sentiment against slave labor programs for women on welfare, for free and adequate childcare, and a strong stand against segregation and deportation. There is also a strong movement of support for cases like the landmark GM Fremont case, where the workers are demanding special seniority rights for laid-off women and minority workers and raising the demand for a shorter workweek with no cut in pay.

It is no surprise that the bureaucrats are hoping to keep the discussion of the convention centered on the constitution and away from program. If a discussion of program comes onto the convention floor, their policies of inaction and sell-out will leave them more isolated than ever. There is no doubt that the hundreds of rank-and-file women who will be represented at the convention will take on the struggle with them as a strategic part of building CLUW as a militant, fighting organization of working women.

CLUW PLANS FOR SECOND CONVENTION

by Barbara Winslow

The long awaited November 1-2 meeting of the National Coordinating Committee of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) was another bust. There wasn't a quorum. Only 69 of the 85 needed delegates showed up.

This meant that the elected national leadership of CLUW could not take any actions, or make any decisions to prepare for the December 6-7 Constitutional Convention.

And this was exactly what Olga Madar, president of CLUW, wanted.

CLUW has been a wayward child of the women union bureaucrats ever since it was founded in March, 1974. Its unexpected popularity among working women gave birth to an organization of active members, working women eager to take on their employers' sexist policies.

The actions they organized in CLUW's name often went against the official and conservative policies of unions CLUW's leaders are responsible to. During CLUW's brief history its bureaucrat leaders have been working frantically to erode democracy at the membership level.

Now they are ready to go in for the kill at the convention. There they want to establish CLUW for once and for all as an organization for women union officials, not for working women.

Free Hand

The absence of a quorum gives Madar a free hand to plan this important convention herself.

Nonetheless, the NCC delegates discussed some of the issues facing the convention.

The first controversial issue will be the convention agenda. Without consulting either the officers or the steering committee members, Madar prepared the conventional call and agenda. It provides for no time for serious debate and discussion on issues facing CLUW.

Instead, time is allotted for such activities as singing the national anthem, reciting the CLUW pledge (whatever that will be) and listening to a range of politicians and union bureaucrats.

Delegates challenged this agenda. Madar responded with "We are all human beings here, and human beings don't treat people the way you treat me."

Despite Madar's whining, an alternative agenda will be presented.

CLUW's Future

The most important fight of the convention will be over CLUW's future as an organization of trade union women.

A resolution has been submitted which states "that the Coalition of Labor Union Women has the right to issue policy, make decisions and take actions regardless of the policies or wishes of one or any of the international unions."

This resolution specifically revokes a decision taken at the January NCC which said that CLUW members could not engage in activities against an employer without the consent and approval of the union involved.

This resolution must be fought for and won at the convention if CLUW is to survive as an organization of women workers. Otherwise members will be a passive power base for international union leaders.

The second fight at the convention will be over CLUW's structure. Madar wants CLUW's decision-making bodies to be based solely upon union representation.

Her plan makes no provision for chapter representation.

It is only through a structure of chapters which unite women from many unions that CLUW membership has any meaning. Madar's proposed structure would effectively kill CLUW as an independent organization of union women.

Instead, it would place CLUW under the control of the international unions, specifically UAW, AFSCME, and the AFT. The international unions and their leaders like Madar have no more interest in fighting for the rights of working women than they show in fighting for any members.

Chapters

The chapters of working women have had that interest, and under the existing structure, some power to act on it.

One hopeful development in CLUW has been the work of the Wayne County CLUW Caucus. The caucus is a group of Wayne County CLUW members who want to make CLUW an effective organization for working women.

They have sent out flyers calling for a broad opposition to Madar's policies for the constitutional convention. The caucus wants to center the fight on independence from the International Unions.

For more information about Wayne County Caucus write PO Box 542A, Detroit, Michigan 48232.

Unless the CLUW militants who have been trying to build it into an organization that fights for working women can get together and win at the constitutional convention, CLUW's original promise to fight for women's equality will be lost.

--from Workers Power, November 7, 1975