

14 Charles Lane  
New York, N.Y. 10014  
February 4, 1976

To Branch Organizers

Dear Comrades,

Attached is a report presented to the Political Committee by Cindy Jaquith on Jan. 23. Since then we learned of developments in regard to the national ERA action in Springfield, Illinois.

It was reported in the February 6 issue of the Militant that the national board of NOW had called this action for April 20. However, last weekend the Illinois state board of NOW met and rediscussed the proposed action and date, and decided to poll the national board before a call for an action is issued. Therefore, the previously planned action is up in the air. As soon as we have more information, it will be made available to the branches.

Comradely,

  
Doug Jenness  
SWP National Office

AFT Plays Major Role:  
CLUW Reaffirms Action Program at First Constitutional Convention

--by Sheli Lukin, Cochairwoman, AFT Woman's Rights  
Committee (article from Jan. 1976 American Teacher)

When the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) held its first constitutional convention here Dec. 5-7 more than 1,000 delegates, including almost 100 AFT members from across the country, were present.

Voting decisively to keep CLUW a trade-union organization, they rejected by big margins efforts to open up CLUW membership to nonunion members, and they reaffirmed the coalition's main goal of developing action programs within the framework of the labor movement in four key areas:

\*To strengthen the role and participation of women within their unions and the trade-union movement as a whole;

\*To seek affirmative action in the workplace;

\*To organize the millions of unorganized women workers;

\*To encourage union women to play an active role in the legislative and political processes of their unions and the nation.

In a message to the convention, AFL-CIO President George Meany noted CLUW's "consistent progress" and stated that "as the AFL-CIO convention made clear, we are ready to cooperate with CLUW on programs of common interest, particularly passage of the Equal Rights Amendment -- a priority matter to the entire trade-union movement."

The host local to AFTers was the Detroit Federation of Teachers, Local 231, whose delegation was led by AFT Vice-President Mary Ellen Riordan. The local donated hundreds of hours to the convention planning committee, and hosted a reception for the AFT participants.

Well before the convention began, preparations for participation were taking place at many locations and levels. Among the many active AFT members were Betty Finneran, Local 420, who was elected president of the St. Louis CLUW chapter; Sylvia Lieberman, Local 3, who was elected president of the Philadelphia chapter; Joan Agin, Local 2, a member of the AFT Women's Rights Committee who was elected secretary of the New York City chapter; Sharon Petersons, secretary of the Madison (Wis.) Vocational School Teachers Union, Local 243, who was elected secretary of the Madison-Janesville chapter; Nancy Loewensohn, Local 1021, elected treasurer of the Los Angeles chapter; Vivian Fenchel and Sheli Lukin, Local 1, who co-chaired the legislative and political-action committee of the Chicago chapter; and Heather Booth, Local 189, who chairs the Chicago chapter education committee.

Push for Equal Rights.

At the convention, CLUW President Olga Madar, a retired vice-president of the Auto Workers, traced CLUW's role in mobilizing support for the Equal Rights Amendment and cited the AFL-CIO convention action urging that these votes of legislators on ERA be used as one of the principal criteria for their endorsement by the Committee on Political Education (COPE) or by individual unions. She outlined a stepped-up program of lobbying in key states next year to win ratification of ERA.

"Our efforts during the last 21 months are only the beginning," Madar said. "Through unity, through our unions, working women will become full and equal partners -- not only in our unions, but in every aspect of our daily lives. We demand no more than that," she declared. "We will accept no less."

CLUW's newly adopted constitution sets up a national council of five top officers and a national executive board with proportional representation from unions, regions, and chapters.

The convention was the first since CLUW's founding convention nearly two years ago. During the interim period, Majorie Stern, Local 2121, has been serving on the CLUW steering committee as well as on the national coordinating committee with Patricia Halpin, Local 3; Cathern Davis, Local 1600; and Jane Walsh, Local 6.

Lulkin and Halpin, who cochair the women's rights committee of AFT, have both been deeply involved in CLUW national activities as well. Halpin chaired the East Coast constitutional committee while Lulkin handled Midwest publicity and write a column for the national newsletter called "Inside the Unions." Sally Muravchik, assistant to the AFT secretary-treasurer, was instrumental in helping develop the convention rules.

Of the 36-million working women in the U. S., fewer than 5 million are unionized, delegates learned. CLUW will direct its activities toward assisting these women in unionizing and encouraging unions to be more aggressive in efforts to bring unorganized women under collective-bargaining agreements, but did not accept a proposal to open its membership to all women.

Women at the convention also beat back a minority structure proposal which would have placed CLUW in an adversary or dual-union position and accepted the proposal of the majority caucus that the coalition would operate primarily within the structures of their unions.

Two major victories won by AFT at the convention were the election of Halpin as the Pennsylvania regional vice-president, and Marilou Cheff, Local 231, as the alternate to the Michigan regional vice-president,

Elections of four AFT delegates and alternates to the national executive board could not be held in Detroit. The newly adopted constitution stipulates that in order to hold an election, 20 percent of a union's CLUW membership must be in attendance. For AFT, which has the highest membership in CLUW of any union, 154 persons were required.

A mail-ballot referendum will be conducted by CLUW to elect the AFT delegates and alternates. Each CLUW member will receive a notice with the election rules. Nominations will be made by petition of 10 percent (77) of the membership.

The AFT caucus held two official meetings during the convention. At the first meeting the women elected

Lulkin as caucus chairperson and heard analyses of various constitutional proposals. Halpin presented the proposals of the majority caucus and Petersons presented the viewpoint of the minority caucus.

At the second meeting, AFTers devoted their time to hearing reports from Riordan on the role of women in the AFT, Joann Horowitz, Local 571, on the status of ERA and legislation for a National Women's Conference, and Booth on a proposal to focus CLUW activities towards winning rights for women from branches of the federal government.

Madar was returned to office as national president. Also re-elected were Vice-President Addie Wyatt of the Meat Cutters and Treasurer Gloria Johnson of the Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers. Joyce Miller of the Clothing Workers was elected corresponding secretary, and Patsy Fryman of the Communications Workers recording secretary.

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TELEGRAM SENT BY GEORGE MEANY

Ms. Olga M. Madar, President  
Coalition of Labor Union Women  
Detroit, Michigan

Please extend my personal best wishes to the delegates attending the Second National Conference of the Coalition of Labor Union Women. In your first year, you have made consistent progress and encountered many serious problems. In the trade union tradition, you have not been content with successes but have moved steadily forward to overcome each obstacle. As the AFL-CIO convention made clear, we are ready to cooperate with CLUW on programs of common interest, particularly passage of the Equal Rights Amendments, which must be a priority matter to the entire trade union movement. I trust the convention will be constructive and successful.

George Meany  
President, AFL-CIO