

14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
September 3, 1975

TO ALL BRANCH ORGANIZERS AND CLUW WORK DIRECTORS

Dear Comrades,

At our convention in August, we discussed some of the problems and perspectives facing CLUW in the coming months, specifically between now and the CLUW convention to be held in Detroit December 6 and 7.

We set several goals:

1) To encourage CLUW and individual unions to recruit as many women as possible to CLUW. Those women who join before October 1 will have vote and voice at the convention.

2) To help get as many CLUW members as possible to attend the convention. The CLUW press release announcing the convention indicates that the CLUW leadership expects the convention to be big. Several unions, certainly the UAW and the AFT, will have many members there. All CLUW members should attend. That means getting unions to pay for buses, plane fares, hotel bills, etc. and fund raising events to raise money for those women not able to get financial support from their unions.

Several important issues will be acted upon at the upcoming convention. Structural and constitutional questions, some action proposals (perhaps on ERA and Boston), and the question of the layoffs and CLUW's response to them. We will want to be involved in the discussions around all these issues.

One of the most important political questions facing CLUW is the massive unemployment. In addition to their effect on the working class and union movement as a whole, the layoffs are having a particularly devastating effect on women and Blacks and are being used to roll back the gains of affirmative action. As a union women's organization, CLUW should be in the vanguard of the fight against all the layoffs, and also against their discriminatory character.

At the last National Coordinating Committee of CLUW held in Houston in May, the CLUW NCC failed to adopt a resolution in defense of affirmative action. Instead, they adopted a resolution which, at best, ignores the issue. (The resolution adopted is attached as well as the Jean Tussey resolution which failed to pass.)

One job of the CLUW convention should be to reverse this and take a clear-cut stand against the discriminatory layoffs.

Although this issue is becoming much clearer, especially following the NAACP convention and further discussion about it within the labor movement, many people, including members of CLUW, are still confused about it.

An educational campaign within CLUW is needed. Between now

and the convention, as much education as possible should be carried out. This means panels, debates, forums sponsored by CLUW. Classes and literature can be prepared.

Some of CLUW's leadership considers this a closed question. Not wanting to buck their own union bureaucracy, most of which has a reactionary position on this question, they will try to keep it from even being discussed, much less adopt a correct resolution on this at the convention.

This means that we will have to make every effort to gather together as many women as possible who agree with us on this issue. Several things must be done:

1) We should talk to everyone we know, and seek out and meet those we don't yet know, who might agree, or could be convinced, that CLUW's present position on discriminatory layoffs should be reversed.

The International Executive Board of AFSCME passed a resolution on this question at its June 30 meeting. (A copy is attached.) It is a big step forward over the position adopted at the last CLUW NCC meeting and should help us in approaching women in AFSCME. Women in the Newspaper Guild and the NEA might also be particularly interested.

We should also approach our opponents, IS, CP, YAWF, and others, to find out where they stand and encourage them to work with us on this issue.

2) In some areas, the CLUW chapters may want to pass resolutions on this question to take to the convention and to make their positions known.

The CLUW NCC is holding its next meeting in Chicago on Sept. 20 and 21, with a steering committee meeting the evening of the 19th. This will be the first opportunity to re-discuss this issue on a national level. We want this question on the agenda of the NCC and through the NCC on the agenda of the convention.

As many members of the SWP who are also members of CLUW should try to be at the NCC, and, of course, those who are members of the NCC should make a special effort.

At our convention we also discussed how to best coordinate our efforts nationally. The first step is for each area, after they have had a meeting of the CLUW fraction and discussed this, to send in a report with the following information:

1. Who is in charge of CLUW work in your area, how many members of CLUW and in what unions?

2. What plans are feasible for your area in applying this perspective, i.e. are any projections being made for an educational campaign and who are you planning to talk to about it?

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3. What opponents are in your area in CLUW and what do they think on this question?

4. Who in your area can make the NCC meeting in Chicago?

Comradely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda Jenness". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Linda Jenness
National Office

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[introduced by Connie Kopelov and adopted by CLUW NCC]

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 where 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.

[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.

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run off by union labor [in original]

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[Passed at AFSCME International Executive Board Meeting
June 30, 1975]

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION RESOLUTION

Three factors combine to make economic layoffs of public employees counterproductive in this period of economic recession.

First, with unemployment soaring, the demand for public services is reaching new dimensions in local and state governments around the nation. That trend, in months to come, can only accelerate as the impact of the recession drags on.

Second, through layoffs, the government becomes party to fueling the general economic downturn by increasing the already dangerously high level of joblessness.

Third, a less visible, but no less unfortunate consequence of public employee layoffs is the erosion of gains which have been made to correct decades of discrimination against women and minorities in our nation. Only in recent years, through both negotiated and legislated changes initiated by the union movement, has there been a weakening of traditional employer-biased hiring practices which either excluded women and minorities, or confined them to the lowest rungs of public employment.

In areas where honest and reasonable bargaining has influenced employee-employer relationships for several years there is now measurable evidence of a marked decrease in abuse of hiring and promotion policies. Senseless layoffs of needed public employees can only lead to a return of the discriminatory abuses of the past. The possibility of public employee layoffs may threaten jobs of thousands of women and minority employees who have entered public service in the last few years.

AFSCME, with other unions, is now faced with the imminent possibility that two hard-won principles, seniority and affirmative action, will be eroded as governmental employers follow a disastrous course of decreasing public service in this period of increased public need.

Therefore Be It Resolved:

That AFSCME will continue to resist layoffs of public employees which make consumers of public services the victims of disastrous economic policies pursued on the national and local levels of government.

That AFSCME will continue the effort to eliminate hiring and promotion policies in state and local government that victimize women and minorities.

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That AFSCME will continue to press for a federal infusion of money that will protect both the current level of public service and the jobs of thousands of recently hired women and minorities.

That AFSCME will urge its local affiliates to protect against management eroding either the hard-won principle of seniority or the equally hard-won principle of affirmative action through layoffs that are politically motivated, unjustified, or an attempt to return to the discriminatory abuses of the past.

That AFSCME will, in the event of public employee layoffs, urge its local affiliates to review layoffs on a case-by-case basis to insure that layoff procedures are not used as a guise to permit roll-backs of recently initiated affirmative action gains in hiring and promotion policies which were won through union negotiations, affirmative action plans, EEOC decisions, or legal action.