

POLITICAL BUREAU

NUMBER 2

January 30, 1974

Present: Britton, Finkel, A. Hansen, D. Jenness, Jones,
Lovell, Stone

Visitors: Boehm, L. Jenness, Lund, Scott, Stapleton, Whicker

Chair: D. Jenness

AGENDA: 1. Coalition of Labor Union Women
2. 1974 Election Campaign Committee
3. Membership
4. Transfers

1. COALITION OF LABOR UNION WOMEN

L. Jenness reported on the development of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) and the building of the CLUW conference scheduled for March. (See attached)

Discussion

Motion to approve the report.

Carried.

2. 1974 ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

Boehm reported on socialist propaganda offensive in the 1974 elections including national speaking tours for Debby Bustin and Maceo Dixon on behalf of a 1974 SWP National Election Campaign Committee.

Discussion

Motion to approve the report.

Carried.

3. MEMBERSHIP

Scott reported on the recommendation of the Upper West Side branch to readmit J.H. into membership in the party.

Discussion

Motion: To concur with the recommendation of the Upper West Side branch to readmit J.H. into membership in the party.

Carried.

Scott reported on the recommendation of the Los Angeles branch to readmit N.R. into membership in the party.

Discussion

Motion: To concur with the recommendation of the Los Angeles branch to readmit N.R. into membership in the party.

Carried.

Scott reported on the recommendation of the Boston branch to readmit G.D. into membership in the party.

Motion: To concur with the recommendation of the Boston branch to readmit G.D. into membership in the party.

Carried.

Scott reported on the recommendation of the San Francisco branch to readmit D.P. into membership in the party.

Motion: To concur with the recommendation of the San Francisco branch to readmit D.P. into membership in the party.

Carried.

4. TRANSFERS

Scott presented a list of transfers to be approved.

Discussion

Motion: To approve the proposal.

Carried.

MEETING ADJOURNED

February 2, 1974

TO ALL ORGANIZERS

Dear Comrades,

The following report by Linda Jenness on the Coalition of Labor Union Women was presented to the Political Bureau on January 30, 1974.

Comradely,

Betsey Stone
SWP National Office

Report to the Political Bureau on
the Coalition of Labor Union Women

by Linda Jenness

Over the past several months there have been a series of meetings of trade union women that we have participated in. These include two large planning meetings of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW)--the June 30 Midwest planning meeting of 200 women in Chicago and the December 8 East Coast planning meeting of 300 in Philadelphia. The Teamsters called a meeting of trade union women in St. Louis last fall which drew 400 women and on January 19 the First New York Trade Union Women's conference was held in which 650 women participated. Last May a meeting of 300 women was held in the Bay Area under the auspices of the California Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO. And there have been other, smaller meetings.

These gatherings have attracted a large layer of older women who have been in the union movement for several years, some of whom are union officials of one kind or another, as well as younger women, primarily rank and file who are new to the union movement. A significant number of Black women have taken part.

A wide range of issues has been discussed. They include the fight for equal pay and job opportunities for women workers, organizing the unorganized women, passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, day care for working mothers, affirmative action plans, unemployment, the layoffs caused by the "energy crisis," and how to get better female representation in the union structure. In New York after the January 19 meeting, the women were bussed to Macy's where they picketed on behalf of the Farah pants strikers.

In the past period, in addition to these gatherings, there have also been a number of significant struggles spearheaded by women workers. These include the organizing drive at Columbia University, the fight against a reclassification plan in Seattle, the unionizing of domestic workers, the Farah pants strike, and others.

All of the meetings of trade union women have received wide and favorable coverage from the bourgeois press, union press, and feminist press.

From the size of these meetings, and our initial participation in them, it has become clear that this ferment among working women is a real and potentially powerful development. We want to step up our participation in this development, and specifically our participation in CLUW.

CLUW has called for a national conference, open to all union women, to be held in Chicago on March 23-24. Several of our comrades have been involved in CLUW since its inception in June 1973 and some have been elected as their state or union representative to CLUW. We are in a position to assume some responsibility for the building of the national conference and between now and the conference want to go on a campaign footing to do so. What can be done will vary from area to area, but every branch should consider setting up a fraction to direct this work.

There are several areas in which our forces can have an effect. We can play a role in the size of the conference by bringing as many women unionists as possible. This is a national conference and we can help make sure that it has national representation, including from the West Coast and the South.

Our participation can also help cut across any attempts to narrow the conference and restrict attendance. For instance, some of the leadership of CLUW has a narrow concept of who should attend. There has been backroom discussion about how the National Education Association (NEA) "isn't really a union", or the Farm Workers and Domestic Workers are not "traditional unions." We, of course, want all those women to attend and by helping to bring them there can cut across that kind of nonsense. In other words, we can help the conference have an outward reaching approach.

In the next few weeks The Militant plans to increase its coverage of this development and use its pages to help build the conference.

In the last few weeks, the conference building has picked up. The American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) is building the conference on a national scale.

On January 26 there was a meeting of women from Virginia to discuss how to get women from that state to attend the conference.

A trade union women's conference will be held in Cleveland on February 24 where, in addition to other activities, plans will be made to get Ohio women to the conference.

The meeting place in Chicago for the national conference seats 2,300 people. Already 1,500 women have made reservations to attend.

The structure for the conference itself is not definitively established, but at this point the conference is open to all union women. It is not a delegated conference. Decisions will be made on the basis of one woman, one vote. A series of workshops on issues are being planned.

The Communist Party is heavily involved in CLUW. They have at least two members on the national steering committee and several of the national leaders are in that milieu. The Daily World has given extensive coverage to the conference. At some of the local planning meetings the CP has raised the issue of impeachment and will probably do so at the national conference.

The CLUW conferences, and the other union women conferences, have received very broad union endorsement. For instance, the New York meeting on January 19 was endorsed by the N.Y. Central Labor Council as well as 26 independent and AFL-CIO unions. The Philadelphia gathering was endorsed by the Philadelphia Central Labor Council, the UAW, the Teamsters, and many others. It should not be difficult to get local endorsement from the unions in your area. In some areas the unions have provided an office, leaflets, and attempts are being made to have them finance transportation.

Our immediate priority is to build the conference. If between two and three thousand trade union women gather in Chicago to discuss union women's issues it will be very significant.

Over the next few weeks we will be discussing nationally what we think some of the priorities for the conference should be, what kinds of resolutions we think should be discussed and what on-going activities we would want to support. So far, out of the planning meetings, some suggestions have already come forth. There is discussion of calling for actions around the ERA. There has also been discussion about activities around day care. At a Pennsylvania state planning meeting there was significant discussion about unemployment and layoffs caused by the energy crisis. Comrades who have ideas or suggestions from their work in this area should send them in.

This is an exciting new development for our trade union comrades--both male and female. Our experience has been that once the branches carefully think out what possibilities there are for building the conference in their area that there are many openings. Through this work our comrades will meet many new activists and will become involved in an important area of work.

Comrades should re-read the previous three reports sent to the branches on CLUW. One dated July 10 from Paula Reimers, another dated September 19 from Paula Reimers, and one dated January 5 from Linda Jenness.

Enclosed are copies of some conference material which should be helpful. The conference will be held at the Pick-Congress Hotel in Chicago on March 23-24. Information can be obtained from the CLUW National conference arrangements committee by writing to Addie Wyatt, chairwoman, 4859 S. Wabash, Chicago, Illinois 60615.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONFERENCE OF WOMEN TRADE UNION LEADERS

CHICAGO, June 30--More than 200 trade union women from 20 international unions and 18 states, mostly Midwestern, met all day Saturday, June 30 to discuss their common problems and frustrations, to plan for a continuing national organization and to call for a national meeting next year to make policy and establish an ongoing structure. The meeting is the first of this nature.

The group was composed of rank and file trade union members, staff members and officers of local, national and international trade unions. Some women represented only themselves at the meeting, speaking only unofficially for the women in their organizations; others came as designated representatives of their unions with the sanction and cooperation of the top officials of their organizations.

While organizations of women in other areas have been growing in recent years, trade union women until today generally did not have an inter-union framework for the exchange of information, for plans of action to fight for common goals and the solution of problems affecting all women in the work force. The women will provide leadership within the framework of the trade union movement.

The group is deeply concerned with finding solutions for the plight of some 30 million unorganized women, the most economically disadvantaged group in our country and bringing them into the mainstream of organized labor.

Emphasizing social and economic problems, the women discussed the needs of welfare mothers and older women and provisions for child care, equal pay, upgrading and equitable representation of women in union structures and policy making.

Statements of policy were not adopted because the Conference has not yet constituted itself as a national body.

The group elected a coordinating and steering committee composed of one member from each international union and state represented at the conference. A separate planning committee will meet soon to begin organizing the national conference. Regional meetings, including one on the East Coast and one on the West Coast will be held in preparation for the national conference.

Spokeswomen for the group at today's meeting were Catherine Conroy of the International Staff of the Communications Workers of America; Addie Wyatt, Director of Women's Affairs for the Amalgamated Meat Cutters, both affiliates of the AFL-CIO; and Olga Madar, International Vice-President of the United Auto Workers.

Attached is a list of national and international unions whose members participated in today's meeting.

For further information contact: Yetta Riesel (202)296-2990

INTERNATIONAL UNIONS REPRESENTED AT THE CONFERENCE

Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America
Amalgamated Meat Cutters
American Federation of Teachers
American Federation of Government Employees
American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees
Brotherhood of Railway, Airline and Steamship Clerks
Communications Workers of America
Grain Millers
Hotel and Restaurant Workers
International Association of Machinists
International Ladies Garment Workers Union
International Typographical Union
Newspaper Guild
Office and Professional Employees
Service Employees International Union
Brotherhood of Teamsters
United Auto Workers
United Farm Workers
United Steelworkers of America
Veterans Administration Service Employees

MIDWEST CONFERENCE OF UNION WOMEN LEADERS
PLANNING COMMITTEE OFFICERS

CO-CHAIRWOMEN

Edith Van Horn
International Staff United Auto
Workers
8000 E. Jefferson Ave.
Detroit, 48214

Addie Wyatt
Director of Women's Affairs
AMC & BW of North America
4859 S. Wabash
Chicago, Illinois 60615

VICE-CHAIRWOMAN

Alice Weatherwax
Financial Secretary
Chicago Teachers Union, AFT

TREASURER

Ola Kennedy, Committeewoman
United Steelworkers

SECRETARY

Jean Thurman
National Representative
American Federation of Teachers

CONFERENCE COORDINATORS

Olga Madar, Int'l Vice-President
United Auto Workers
8000 E. Jefferson
Detroit, Michigan 48214

Catherine Conroy
3535 W. Highland Blvd.
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53208

Addie Wyatt

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American Federation of State,
County and Municipal Employees
1155 Fifteenth Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005

TO: Council Directors and Local Presidents

FROM: Linda Tarr-Whelan

SUBJECT: Coalition of Labor Union Women

DATE: January 7, 1974

On March 23-24, 1974, the Coalition of Labor Union Women will meet in Chicago for its first national conference. This meeting represents the first effort of union women to join together to deal with the problems of working women. During the last six months, AFSCME women members and staff have been active in regional planning meetings across the country.

The Coalition was created to bring together union women to deal with their special concerns as unionists and women in the work force. In an inter-union framework, the Coalition will consider the problems of organizing the unorganized, equitable hiring and promotion practices, upgrading and affirmative action programs, involving more women in Union structures and policy making decisions, education about women's legal rights, adequate minimum wage and protection against unemployment, and adequate maternity benefits and child care.

In The Public Employee we have suggested that women members interested in the Coalition contact the Program Development Department at Headquarters. We will advise you of your members who get in touch with us.

The International Union supports the conference and will be active in it with staff involvement and other assistance. We encourage the participation of AFSCME members in the Conference and hope that Councils and Locals will do what they can to assist the participation of their members in the conference.

All women members and staff of labor unions are eligible to attend. A notice which can be reproduced for your use is attached. In order to coordinate AFSCME's participation we have enclosed for your use self-addressed postcards to be returned to the Program Development Department by those women who would like to attend.

Enclosures

cc: International Vice Presidents