

# REPORTER

## USING RESEARCH AS AN ORGANIZING TOOL: LAMAP'S PARTICIPATORY APPROACH TO STRATEGIC RESEARCH

by Catha Worthman

Unionists are seeking ways to reignite the labor movement with creative strategies for social change. Many are concluding that only multi-union collaboration can mobilize the vast resources and people necessary to transform the balance of power in favor of working people. Unions must go beyond single site organizing to target entire industries, work in partnership with community activists, and apply creative pressure to corporate and political power structures. Strategic research and analysis are essential to planning winning campaigns along these lines.

In this context, an initiative called the Los Angeles Manufacturing Action Project is applying a participatory research model during the first phase of its project to create a multi-union, area-wide organizing campaign. By involving a diverse coalition of union staff and rank and file members in collaborative research with community activists and Masters and Ph.D. students, LAMAP is building an organization while mapping the terrain and developing mass organizing strategies. Both the substance and the process of LAMAP's research deserve examination by activists in search of new models for organizing.

Peter Olney, Project Coordinator, says the organization aims to "transform living and working conditions for 400,000 workers — largely immigrant workers — who toil in manufacturing jobs in LA's Alameda Corridor." [see box for information about the Alameda Corridor]. Eight industrial unions have joined the first phase of the project, which involves strategic research, community outreach, and organizing the AFL-CIO institutions to commit to the project. LAMAP's member unions represent tens of thousands of workers in manufacturing

sectors such as garment, auto, metals, and transportation. Some of the participating community organizations include the UCLA Labor Center, Citizens for a Better Environment and the Secretary of the Federation of Jaliscan Clubs (*Federacion de Clubes Jaliscences*).

LAMAP's industrial sectoral research focuses on four major components: viability, leverageability, infrastructure, and community assets. The "viability" study identifies which of the manufacturing industries in the Alameda Corridor can best support the additional costs of unionization, based on industries employment numbers and revenue growth, and endemic needs to remain in Los Angeles. Sectors in non-durable manufacturing have been targeted for in-depth research on this basis, including garment and textiles, auto and metal parts, paper, transportation, food processing and others. Researchers also analyze community social and political activities, and suggest potential leverage for winning strong collective bargaining agreements. Through their collaborative participation in research and thinking about such targeting the union staff confront what Olney terms

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# FROM THE CHAIR

With this issue, we continue the excellent breadth and depth of the "new" Labor Center Reporter. Congratulations to the Editorial Board for its hard work and vision. You have become a vital and dynamic board, and I know that your ideas will keep the LCR growing in both scholarship and excitement.

It is with much regret that I have accepted the resignation of John Sladkus, who has been the Labor Center staff person working on the LCR. He has done a tremendous job on the Editorial Board, as well as with the internship program, our Internet trainings and the upcoming Young Unionists Conference. John, you will be sorely missed by everyone who has had the good fortune to work with you in the last year and a half.

As we head into a new future being crafted at least in part by people's fears, it is my hope that the Labor Center can encourage more dialogue and new forums where people from different perspectives and backgrounds can come together to address the major problems facing us in all aspects of our lives, in ways that diminish fear and increase communication and respect for each other. Union members will be looking to their unions to provide this kind of place to think and talk their way to new solutions. In addition, the labor movement has a unique opportunity at this time to provide leadership in working with all groups who are dedicated to a decent future for all people.

I look forward to reporting on our successes in the future!

— Mary Ruth Gross, Chair

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## NOTES . . .

### *Summer Conference for Young Unionists*

It's not too late to sign up for the Summer Conference for Young Unionists. For more information, see page 4 or contact John Sladkus at (510) 643-6815.

### *Submissions to the Labor Center Reporter*

If you would like to submit an article for possible publication in a future *Labor Center Reporter*, send it to *Labor Center Reporter*, 2521 Channing Way #5555, Berkeley, CA 94720-5555 or e-mail it to clre@violet.berkeley.edu. Deadline for the next issue is August 22, 1995.

### *Get more info about the Labor Center*

Don't forget to check out the calendar and update card in the back of this issue. It's a quick and easy way to learn more about the Labor Center.

### *Support the Labor Center Reporter*

With continuing budget cuts, the Labor Center needs your support now more than ever in order to continue to produce the LCR. You can use the update card on the back of this issue to help. Thank you.

*The articles in this issue do not necessarily represent the opinion of the Center for Labor Research and Education, the Institute of Industrial Relations, or the University of California. Each author is solely responsible for the contents of his or her article. Labor organizations and their press associations are encouraged to reproduce any LCR articles for further distribution.*

# WILL LABOR-MANAGEMENT TEAMS WORK IN SAN FRANCISCO HOTELS?

by Nathan Newman

Are there labor-management teams that benefit workers and their unions? San Francisco hotel workers will begin preliminary meeting with managers in “problem solving” groups in hotels across the city under terms established in contract negotiations last fall. And the union leadership and the members feel this new relationship is an almost pure gain for the hotel workers in the city.

Now, this is not an argument for teams across the board, but the process established in San Francisco seems close to the ideal of what a union could desire if it’s going into such a relationship. Before a “team” contract was even signed, the two major San Francisco hotel unions —HERE Local 2 and SEIU Local 14 – began meetings with twelve major SF hotel managements long before the contract was even negotiated. In an almost unprecedented manner, multiple corporations in a single city sat down with two major unions covering their 3000 employees to discuss how to remake their industry

For thirteen weeks, line managers and rank-and-file workers met together with professional independent facilitators to discuss the long-term health of the industry and a changed relationship between management and their workers. Separate groups were constituted to discuss improvements in the kitchen, banquets, housekeeping, the overall food & beverage department, and improving coordination of door, bell, and telephone operators. All of this before any changes in the contract were even made.

The concrete result of the process was a 124-page report dealing with proposed pilot projects for improving teamwork, training, scheduling, and discipline. The process helped the unions and hotels sign a contract that satisfied both sides and that was extended to the rest of the major unionized hotels in the city (involving an additional 2000 employees) that hadn’t participated in the study process. The contract signed by the participating hotels and the unions involved in October 1994 was declared a “living contract” that would be slowly modified as pilot projects are tried at test hotels and expanded at a negotiated pace as both sides agree to changes.

Since unions demanded some kind of security if they were going to engage in any teams, the hotels also agreed to a partial union “successorship clause” to make it less likely that new owners of any hotel could abandon the union contract. An additional \$1.8 million over the next two years was dedicated by hotels to the citywide Education Fund to improve and coordinate training for workers across the city. And the hotels and unions received a \$100,000 federal grant to fund outside facilitators to institute the new “problem-solving” teams in each hotel. Additionally, the unions and the hotels agreed to pursue at least three broad “pilot projects” recommended from the study groups in order to explore ways to improve productivity. Importantly, no changes in work rules were negotiated in exchange for this agreement; instead, all changes will be made citywide only after the union is convinced they benefit workers in the pilot hotels where changes are tested.

Sherie Chiesa, the retiring head of Local 2 of the Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees (HERE) union, notes that the process forced both sides to listen to the other, and most importantly, it built trust. “Trust. That’s the key,” says Chiesa. “It doesn’t happen without that. It just doesn’t happen.” She cautions that it will be a slow process, but she is encouraged. “What

we’re saying is that we don’t trust each other AT THIS POINT to do very much, but we’re working on it.”

One reason the union goes into the team relationship with the hotels with some confidence is that the union showed the hotels the alternative to dealing with their workers fairly. As they were signing the agreement with most of the major ho-

tels, the union ran a militant 11-week strike at the Mark Hopkins, a major downtown union hotel that tried to unilaterally demand concessions from the union. Workers from around the city picketed the Mark Hopkins, shut the hotel restaurants down, and destroyed business at the hotel until the management retreated and signed a contract that was not only substantially the same as the rest of the city, but had some provisions even more favorable to the union.

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# HOTELS

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Overall, the hotel unions saw the study group process as a chance to reorder their relationship with the hotels to stop the periodic attacks on the existence of the union and to create a space to go out and organize non-union hotels. The problem the union faced, as faced by unions across the country, was how hard it has become to organize new hotels. In their first major recent organizing effort at a hotel called the Parc 55, the unions got a majority of workers to sign cards asking to be represented by the union within months of the start of the organizing drive in 1989, but the hotel refused to sign a contract until 1993, committing over 100 Unfair Labor Practices and delaying recognition until a boycott had undermined their business. With that victory, the unions hope that they can begin a more serious organizing job across the city in conjunction with the new relationship with the unionized hotels.

Like the Parc 55, events at the Sir Francis Drake highlight why the union is careful in approaching change. In 1993, the Sir Francis Drake was sold to new owners, all the workers were fired and the contract with the union terminated. In light of "the Drake", the unions saw any new relationship as contingent on new rules to require that if a hotel was sold, the workers jobs and their contract would survive the transition. The union was ready to concede incremental changes in work rules in exchange for improvements in job security, symbolized by

"successorship" protection for union members in case of the sale of any hotel. And the union demanded that they be full partners in any new "teams" established in the hotels.

One key part of the union partnership was a refusal to stop being a union even in team meetings. Employee participants usually caucused together after each session to compare notes, which irritated some managers. Most facilitators and union leaders, however, praised the caucusing system as a way for employees to gain confidence for the next session and a way of recognizing the intimidation individual employees experience in speaking before managers.

At the union hotels involved in the multi-employer study process, both the employers and the employees are gearing up for the next challenge of the "high performance" process: moving the study process into each individual hotel to solve problems on a day-to-day basis. Hopes are high that San Francisco may be creating a new relationship between employers and employees that could preserve a living wage for workers and profitability for hotels into the next century.

Nathan Newman is Co-Director of the Center for Community and Economic Development and a Sociology graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley. A slightly modified version of this article appeared in *Labor Notes*.

## SUMMER CONFERENCE FOR YOUNG UNIONISTS IS ALMOST HERE!

Not too long ago, young workers in their 20's achieved a livable wage by working union. Today, fewer young people are joining labor unions and those that do join, rarely participate. To reverse this trend, a group of young trade unionists concerned about the future of young workers and the labor movement are organizing a **Summer Conference for Young Unionists**, to be held **June 9th-11th**, at the **UC Berkeley campus**. This weekend of workshops will include trainings on workplace organizing, leadership skills, community networking, media campaigns, workplace discrimination and diversity, video production, and corporate campaign research. The goal of the conference is to provide young unionists with the skills necessary to build their unions and recruit other young people to become active members.

Unions are asked to sponsor their members for the conference. Registration fees will cover room, board, and workshop expenses. For further information, please contact: John Sladkus, Coordinator, Summer Conference for Young Unionists, 2521 Channing Way #5555, Berkeley, CA 94720-5555 Tel: (510) 643-6815 Fax: (510) 642-6432, e-mail: [sladkus@uclink.berkeley.edu](mailto:sladkus@uclink.berkeley.edu), or fill out and return the update card on the back of this newsletter. The Conference is sponsored by the UC Berkeley Labor Center and the AFL-CIO Organizing Institute.



# ATTENTION BAY AREA LOCAL UNIONS NEED A STUDENT INTERN?

We would like to invite your union to participate in the Labor Center's Student Internship Program this fall. The format of this fall's internship program will be the same as it has been in the past. Student interns earn academic credit working eight hours per week on projects selected and supervised by the union. Interns will be enrolled in a unique class that helps them apply their research skills to labor internships. Most of the students and the unions in previous programs were very positive about the experience. Unions are not expected to pay students, but expenses for travel and phone calls would be greatly appreciated by the students if possible. Our only stipulations are that students' duties not be primarily clerical, nor should students serve as replacements for paid employees.

In the past, students have assisted in projects as diverse as applying mathematical models to determine costs in the shipping industry, to researching legal precedent on sexual harassment in the workplace, to preparing surveys on health and safety to helping to manage an effective labor neighbor canvassing campaign.

Because we usually have more internships than students and each student selects his/her own project, we strongly suggest that projects be described in an interesting, engaging way. Internship descriptions which most consistently appeal to our students include:

- a brief account of the union, its members, and primary activities.
- a precise and detailed description of what the intern's role and tasks will be.
- what level of direction or supervision the union staff will provide.
- a view of broader significance of the intern's project, i.e. organizationally, politically.
- who students should contact to learn more about this internship.

**To participate in the program, please send us a letter describing the current projects and duties in**

I was pleasantly surprised at the top notch research skills of my last two interns. They were enormously helpful gathering information that the CFT needed for its project Golden Lands Working Hands, the history of the California labor movement high school curriculum. We were so pleased with the quality of work that we hired one of the students on a part time basis over the summer.

*Fred Glass, Communications Director,  
California Federation of Teachers*

**which an intern would be involved.** Once they have reviewed the file of internships in our office, students are often impatient to secure an internship and begin the work. If you can find time to promptly return their phone calls, it will facilitate the placement process for you and the students.

In addition, we are asking those unions with the ability to pay to contribute \$100 to

the Center for Labor Research and Education in order to help us cover some of the administrative costs of running the program. The fee is completely voluntary, as we do not want it to be a barrier to union participation. However, the Labor Center is facing increasingly tight financial conditions and we need your support in order to keep this program in the future.

In the past we have sent this call for applications out in late July, but I would like to get as many internship projects settled before I leave my job at the Labor Center in mid-June, so that the transition for my replacement can be as smooth as possible. I have found that many union staff people are on vacation and difficult to track down during August. If you can send in your project description by **May 26**, we'll be able to make the internship process run smoothly for both you and the students. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to call me at (510) 643-6815. Thank you again for your early attention to your project description.

*John Sladkus, Coordinator  
Center for Labor Research & Education  
Institute of Industrial Relations  
UC Berkeley*



# REBUILDING MILWAUKEE FROM THE GROUND UP

by Stuart Eimer

In October of 1994 an impressive array of activists and government officials gathered in an auditorium in downtown Milwaukee. They had come from labor, church, community, housing and environmental organizations to begin a dialogue about the future of their city. The meeting was the first large public gathering of the Campaign for a Sustainable Milwaukee, a grass roots organizing project for family supporting jobs, healthy neighborhoods and community involvement in economic decisions. Their immediate task was to develop and then implement an alternative economic development plan that addresses both the loss of unionized jobs, and the lack of decent employment opportunities for Milwaukee's African-American and Latino communities. Their long term goal is to do nothing less than fashion an environmentally and socially sustainable plan that can move the Milwaukee metro-economy towards a future of high wages and renewed communities.

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## *The Economic Context*

Like their brothers and sisters across the country, workers in Milwaukee have witnessed the steady erosion of their city's industrial base. Manufacturing, which had accounted for 32 percent of employment in 1970, had fallen to 18 percent by 1990. In the 1980s alone, over 29,000 manufacturing jobs were lost, contributing to an overall increase in unemployment from 3.9 percent in 1970 to 6.83 percent in 1990. As manufacturing jobs left town, the new jobs that were created were overwhelmingly low-wage service sector jobs. Milwaukee now ranks third in the country, behind Miami and Los Angeles, in the creation of such employment. Unfortunately, these service sector jobs pay only a fraction of what manufacturing jobs do, averaging a mere \$13,457 in 1990, compared to \$21,363 in manufacturing.

## *The Campaign*

Intent on reversing these trends, a broad coalition of Milwaukeeans came together in the fall of 1993. All had grown tired of fighting a never ending series of defensive single issue battles. Instead of continually reacting, they sought to develop a plan and a campaign that could offer some proactive solutions to Milwaukee's

economic woes. As Bruce Colburn, chair of the Campaign and Secretary Treasurer of the Milwaukee County Labor Council put it, "We knew what we were opposed to in this economy, but we weren't always sure what we were for. The Campaign is an attempt to answer that question."

The first meetings brought together labor leaders, housing activists, city council and county board members, environmentalists, community activists, religious leaders and others. Discussion centered on the common ground that existed between the various single-issue movements, and plans were made to build on this. The Campaign formed four task forces in areas deemed critical to Milwaukee's future: Jobs and Training, Environment and Transportation, Capital and Credit, and Education. Each task-force consisted of people who had expertise in a particular area. They were asked to generate an analysis, recommendations, and specific policy suggestions for their respective areas. The end goal was a final report to be ratified at a large meeting in the fall of 1994.

## *The Plan*

The plan developed over the next 13 months with each task force reporting on its progress to a monthly meeting of 50 to 100 people. This process facilitated a much needed dialogue between communities who, although usually on the same side, were often too busy to talk to each other. Union members learned about the problems surrounding mortgage redlining in Milwaukee; housing activists listened to environmentalists' concerns about abandoned industrial sites; and environmentalists learned about labor's trouble holding on to jobs that paid a family wage.

While the task forces were drafting the report, they were also doing outreach throughout the community to ensure a large turnout at what was ultimately titled the Community Congress. This congress was held on October 22, and attracted over 200 people from throughout the city. Representatives were there from dozens of community organizations, 16 local unions representing 10 different national unions, and all levels of government.

During the Congress general presentations were made on each of the task forces recommendations. Small

groups then mulled over the particulars, suggested changes and then prioritized. At the end of the day, a general plenary voted to endorse the report, pending minor changes, for final release at the beginning of 1995.

### ***It's Still the Economy, Stupid***

While the report addressed a variety of topics, it was the section on Jobs and Training that drew the most attention. It's there that the Campaign forwarded a development strategy for the metro-economy. The recommendations focused on Milwaukee's potential to become a "prime location for advanced manufacturing." They were guided by the general principle "that public policies should exert upward pressure on community standards for acceptable business conduct, reserve economic development resources for assisting companies in achieving those standards, and insure democratic accountability in the use of public resources." Towards that end, ten specific recommendations were developed (see box below).

### ***Rebuilding Milwaukee***

Having issued their recommendations, organizers began the arduous task of ensuring that the report didn't become just another tome collecting dust in offices around the city. They have developed a steering committee, continued their monthly meetings, and prioritized their goals. "We went through a process of determining what we could accomplish that would simultaneously have the most impact on the local economy, involve the most people, develop leadership and build a strong, diverse coalition," Bill Dempsey, the lead organizer on the

Campaign reports. "We decided to launch a "campaign for a living wage" with the goal of dramatically increasing the quality of low-wage jobs by mandating that firms doing business with the city and county pay a minimum wage of \$7.70." The potential impact of such ordinances could be far reaching. "It's a basic attempt to address the explosion of low-wage jobs in Milwaukee and around the country," Colburn says. "There's no reason that these jobs shouldn't pay a living wage." Ceilanne Libber, a staff member at Milwaukee 9 to 5, an advocacy organization for working women adds, "Such legislation will bump up wages throughout the Milwaukee economy. It will help increase the buying power of our constituency, low-wage working women, and thereby improve the economy of Milwaukee as a whole." Beyond improving the standard of living of low-wage workers, such legislation will also strengthen the ability of unions to organize by taking wages out of competition, and will help nullify the potential impact of privatization efforts. "This will set a standard for wages that will start with firms doing business with local government and spread to the private sector," Colburn suggests. "It's a push to affect job quality throughout our community."

### ***The Future is Open***

While it's too early to judge the ultimate effect of the Campaign for a Sustainable Milwaukee, the very fact that the project has progressed to this point is laudable. The Campaign has managed to unite members of the Milwaukee community who in the past had rarely worked together in a sustained fashion. Moreover, it

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### ***Campaign for a Sustainable Milwaukee Recommendations***

- An Early Warning System that trains workers and members of the community to look for warning signs and indicators that a firm may be on the verge of closing. As part of a comprehensive economic development strategy, such a system can initiate assistance to retain and develop jobs, and can identify job openings for employment-linked training programs.
- An Industry Training Partnership that brings companies and labor together to design training systems that promote incumbent worker training and that ensure a highly skilled future workforce.
- Community Based Training designed to deliver skills to people who are often neglected by public sector training efforts.
- Industrial Extension to help Milwaukee area companies adopt new technologies and processes.
- Community Standards and Clawback provisions consisting of legally-enforceable regulations and contract language that require public monies to be refunded, preferably with an interest penalty, if the recipient company fails to deliver on job promises.
- Public Policy support for Community and Labor Organizing since unions discourage the "low road" of economic development, and when management is willing, improve business performance.
- Community Job Banks and Service Credits to make job searches easier, and to facilitate the trading of services.
- ESOPS and Responsible Financial Institutions to empower workers in their own firms, and to encourage pension funds and religious institutions to use their capital for investment in their community.
- Target Sectors for investment so that public dollars flow into industries that provide the best potential for growth in family supporting jobs.
- Support low-wage workers by expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit, raising and indexing the minimum wage, establishing minimum benefits levels for all workers and by creating public service jobs.

# ORGANIZING FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY EMPOWERS WORKERS

by Laura Sager

Encouraging union members to step up to the task of union leadership can be challenging, especially between contract campaigns. The Clerical-Technical Union (CTU) of Michigan State University, which represents about 2,000 clerical and technical employees, has begun organizing a successful new wave of union activists from among members who have suffered workplace injuries.

A CTU survey revealed that nearly 40 percent of its members suffered from, or exhibited early warning symptoms of, "cumulative trauma disorders," such as carpal tunnel syndrome. CTU responded immediately with a campaign to 1) inform members about cumulative trauma disorders and available medical treatment; 2) convince the university to adopt an ergonomics policy and contract language that would prevent injuries and protect injured workers from retaliation for seeking compensation; and 3) establish an effective health and safety committee.

The campaign developed a variety of strategies, such as publishing interviews with injured workers in CTU's biweekly newsletter, educating members about the symptoms of cumulative trauma disorders and procedures for filing workers compensation claims; and telling injured workers' stories at union health and safety rallies, to the media, and to other victims.

One group of members, dubbed "Carpal Tunnel and the Split Tones", performed a comedy routine in which injured workers sported wrist splints and kazoos and played old tunes with a new twist, such as "I Wanna Hold Your Hand . . . But I Can't"

The publicity brought dramatic results. Union members began seeking treatment through the Workers' Compensation system instead of from their own physicians. Confronted with mounting workers compensation claims, university officials were forced to acknowledge that a problem with cumulative trauma disorders existed.

Members also were emboldened to inform the union when they were harassed, denied accommodations, or forced to work at inappropriate work stations. The union

responded by filing grievances, holding a series of special conferences with top management officials, and speaking out in the local media.

CTU's members with severe cumulative trauma disorders had more complex needs than typical grievants due to the complexity of the Workers' Compensation system, uncertainty of physical recovery, economic insecurity and hostility from supervisors and coworkers.

But, members organized around those common struggles. Joining CTU's Health and Safety Committee, they found information, validation and a sense of community. Realizing the value of this support in alleviating depression and isolation, committee members organized an "Ability Group" and invited other injured workers to share experiences, support and resources at monthly meetings.

The Ability Group gave members involved in lengthy litigation the support they needed to channel their anger and frustration into constructive action.

Organizing has produced concrete results in the workplace, too. Injured workers joined the CTU negotiating team at the bargaining table. Their powerful testimony helped the union win new contract language mandating a joint CTU/MSU Health and Safety Committee.

MSU also has an ergonomics policy. Most new cumulative trauma disorders get reported in the earliest stages and procedures for obtaining work site evaluations and accommodations for injured workers have improved.

The Health and Safety Committee has now expanded to include members who have suffered adverse health effects from high stress or hostile working environments.

Empowering injured workers to come to their own defense — and the defense of their coworkers — is not only winning healthier and safer working conditions, it is continuing to encourage new leaders to step forward from the ranks of the membership. These new activists know from their own experience that it takes a daily commitment to solidarity to keep the union strong.

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Laura Sager is the Program Director of CTU.

## MILWAUKEE

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has crafted a proactive program to address the many social and economic problems facing their city. Given the neo-liberal faith in the market that characterizes both the Clinton administration (i.e. GATT and NAFTA), and the Newt congress, a labor/community

campaign to reassert a citizenry's right to govern its economy is no small feat.

Stuart Eimer is with the Department of Sociology, University of Wisconsin-Madison. The Campaign for a Sustainable Milwaukee can be reached at 1001 E. Keefe Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53212.



# LAMAP

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the “myth of globalization”, and understand empirically the necessity for multi-union organizing. They are studying, for example, the integral linkages between different industry sectors, such as the paper industry producing cartons for the food processing industry, and how transportation links production and distribution.

LAMAP has created unique structures and opportunities for collaboration and overcoming distrust by applying a “participatory research model.” The philosophy which guides this model, as Gilda Haas, a community activist and a UCLA Professor explains, is that “the subjects of research must be involved in defining the research questions if research is going to empower them and make a difference in their lives.” LAMAP’s research process not only involves activists from South East and South Central Los Angeles, but is also developing ownership and enthusiasm among the participating unions.

Events at a day long retreat in February of 1995 demonstrated how LAMAP’s participatory research model establishes remarkable openness among the unions. Union staff described their local affiliates, demographics, local union history, jurisdictions, targeting criteria, strategies and tactics for organizing, and internal union issues. Nearly every union described dramatic declines in their total membership numbers in the Alameda Corridor area, while all have increasing percentages of people of color as members. Every industrial union is confronting changes in the organization of production, which for many has led to plant closings or relocations offshore, destroyed pattern bargaining agreements, and weakened bargaining power and the living standards of their members.

The union presentations also identified tactical and strategic differences, including their criteria for selecting organizing targets. Some have not abandoned working within the NLRB; others, like the ILGWU’s Western Region Research Director, Edna Bonacich, concluded that NLRB elections are “absolutely a joke for immigrant workers.” Many of the unions have renewed commitments to organizing the unorganized by increasing the percentage of dues money spent on organizing programs. All the attending unions said they are searching for new ways to build power for workers, a goal they want LAMAP to help them realize.

Based on the conditions described by the unions, and detailed research presented by graduate students and community scholars, the retreat participants then developed a series of detailed questions to guide the rest of LAMAP’s research, and unions committed to send staff to ongoing workshops. These questions are the base of the feasibility study now underway through the Community Scholars program.

Directed by Gilda Haas, the Community Scholars Program is based at UCLA’s new School of Public Policy and is LAMAP’s fundamental medium for ongoing multi-union collaboration and for community involvement. Through this program, graduate students are joined by community leaders and unionists from the eight participating unions in a series of

weekly classes.

In six sectoral work groups, scholars and unionists analyze the organization of production in their industries, as well as community issues and infrastructure. Through interviews, personal experience, readings and close analysis of data, the researchers examine such issues as technological changes, distribution networks, suppliers, customers, the relative strength of the industries in the area, demographics of the workforce, market dynamics, and work force and community issues.

Monica Silbas, a steward for the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) and one of the Community Scholars, likes the program because “it gives the unionists and activists time, and a non-threatening space, to consider our industries from a strategic point of view.” She notes, for example, “Although the IAM and the United Steel Workers were recently in a bitter feud at USAir in an organizing campaign I worked on, we are now cooperating on an analysis of the metals and autoparts industries in the Alameda Corridor — and our goal is to find common targets for a joint campaign.”

Because rank and file union members will have to be galvanized into action alongside their non-union brothers and sisters if LAMAP is going to realize its vision, their participation in the research and process of strategizing is also vital. Two day-long classes taught by Peter Olney and other accomplished organizers at LA’s Trade Tech Community College provided a laboratory for such inclusion. A class of about 50 mostly rank and file union members, from diverse unions such as garment, film, machinists, and operating engineers, dis-

In six sectoral work groups, scholars and unionists analyze the organization of production in their industries, as well as community issues and infrastructure.



# LAMAP

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cussed successful organizing models from other industries, including Justice for Janitors, HERE, recent UE organizing in plastics, and the 1919 and 1930 iron and steel workers' committees' organizing efforts.

LAMAP organizers are reluctant to discuss achievements at this early stage. Months if not years of fierce struggle may be ahead before the first worker is organized into a union through LAMAP. LAMAP has established a solid foundation for multi-union collaboration through its research process, however, and large scale community outreach began in January of this year. Joel Ochoa, of California Immigrant Workers Association (CIWA) is leading a citizenship and "know your rights" project for Alameda corridor residents. He is reaching

out to ethnically based associations with a mass base like regional clubs and soccer teams. Such outreach is building a database of names and worksites, while building credibility in the community. Ochoa foresees the "community targeting the unions" for investment in social and economic justice for their neighborhoods.

Over the next few months, LAMAP's "Organizing Policy Board" of unions, researchers, and community activists, will transform research into mass organizing, multi-industry strategy proposals. Because strategy will be developed collectively organizers cannot describe the details of its shape, but they are working towards a vision of workers and community activists joined in militant confrontation with local corporate and political power structures.

Catha Worthman is an organizer/researcher for the Service Employees International Union.

## *Manufacturing in Los Angeles and the Alameda Corridor*

*(Based on research by Goetz Wolff, Resources for Employment and Economic Development, and collaborative efforts of LAMAP participants, including community scholars, unionists, and UCLA Masters and Ph.D. students).*

### **Los Angeles is the manufacturing center of the United States**

- Los Angeles is twice the size of any other manufacturing center in the US;
- 700,000 workers were employed in manufacturing in 1992, according to the Employment Development Department statistics, about 19% of the total workforce in Los Angeles;
- Dip in employment numbers in manufacturing in 1979 came in the durable manufacturing sector, first in traditional basic industry such as auto and steel, more recently in defense manufacturing;
- Employment in non-durable "light" manufacturing such as garment, textiles and food processing, has remained constant since 1979, at about 300,000;

LAMAP bases itself on two facts:

1) Los Angeles is the manufacturing center of the United States, and 2) The most dramatic and exciting victories in labor in the last few years have taken place in Los Angeles, mostly among immigrant workers.

— Peter Olney, LAMAP Coordinator

- Many manufacturing industries or sectors have endemic reasons to be located in Los Angeles. Textile producers, for example, have invested in expensive equipment which makes relocation costly, and food processors have to be close to their markets because their goods are perishable;
- In Los Angeles, 50% of all manufacturing workers are Latino, many immigrant;
- In LA's non-durable sector, 75% are immigrant and 66% are Latino.

### **The Alameda Corridor**

- Manufacturing worksites are concentrated in the "Alameda Corridor";
- The Alameda Corridor lies between downtown Los Angeles and the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles, between the 110 and 710 freeways. It is named for Alameda Street which runs down the center of the area;
- The "Corridor" includes many largely African-American and Latino neighborhoods of South East and South Central Los Angeles like Huntington Park, Bell, Bell Gardens, Compton and others;
- Historically the site of union jobs in rubber, steel, and auto, the Corridor is now dominated by low-wage, often highly toxic light manufacturing.

### **The most dramatic recent organizing victories in Labor have been in Los Angeles**

- June 1990: Police attack Justice for Janitors march of several hundred people in Century City. Janitors later win master agreement with International Service Systems (ISS).
- August, 1990: 800 mostly immigrant Mexican workers strike for 5 days with no institutional union presence at a foundry in Rancho Dominguez: American Racing Equipment. With the help of the machinists union, they later win an NLRB election and a contract.
- June 1992: Drywallers strike from Tehachapi mountains to the San Diego border, led by a leadership core of workers from Guanajato in Mexico. The Drywallers later sign a master agreement in 1992, doubling the cents paid per drywall sheet and restoring health benefits.

**LABOR CENTER REPORTER ARTICLE DEADLINE**

**August 22, 1995** - Deadline for the next issue. Submit articles to the *Labor Center Reporter*, 2521 Channing Way #5555, Berkeley, CA 94720-5555, or FAX (510) 642-6432, or e-mail clre@violet.berkeley.edu.

**SUMMER CONFERENCE FOR YOUNG UNIONISTS**

**June 9-10, 1995** - This weekend of workshops will include trainings on workplace organizing, leadership skills, community networking, media campaigns, workplace discrimination and diversity, video production, and corporate campaign research. The goal of the conference is to provide young unionists with the skills necessary to build their unions and recruit other young people to become active members. Contact John Sladkus at (510) 643-6815 for more information.

**STUDENT INTERNSHIP DESCRIPTIONS DEADLINE**

**May 26, 1995** - See page 5 for full details on this exciting program.

*For more information about any of the Labor Center's programs, contact (510) 642-0323 or return the update card on the back of this issue.*

**PUBLICATION SPOTLIGHT:****What to Do When You Get Burned by the Press**

*What happens when a union runs into trouble with the news media, as it certainly will?*

Many unions respond to negative news coverage by running away and cutting off contact with the press. The very people who took the first, brave steps in dealing with reporters can become the loudest, most listened-to voices in labor, arguing **against** media contact. *What to Do When You Get Burned by the Press* starts where other media guides leave off. It focuses on working through the full range of press relations problems, from misquotes to misleading headlines. Using concise language and real-life examples, *What to Do When You Get Burned by the Press* helps unions resist the urge to run away from the news media. It explains the rights that people have as news sources; the professional obligations of reporters and editors, and how unions can fight back, overcome problems, and win **better** coverage from the press. The author, Matt Bates, is Associate Editor of *The Machinist*, a publication of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers. Winner of a first prize award for investigative journalism from the New England Associated Press, he has worked as an editor and reporter in the labor, alternative, and daily press since the 1960s.

**The booklet is 32 pages and costs \$5.00 per copy, with a 20% discount for purchases of 21 or more.**



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