

Community Scholars Course Opens the Campus to the Community

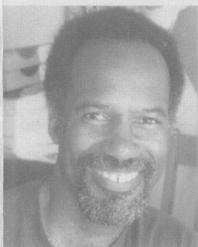
This Spring semester the Labor Center launched a new initiative to encourage collaboration between the university

and the broader community. Modeled after a similar program at UCLA, the *Community Scholars Course* brings graduate students together with labor and community activists to investigate and address important

challenges facing the movement for economic justice.

The inaugural class, taught by Labor Center Specialist Steven Pitts and co-sponsored by the Berkeley Sociology Department, focused on non-traditional methods of building economic and political power in poor communities. The students and community partners broke into teams to develop and carry out practical action research projects. Their efforts included an examination of working conditions in the San Francisco restaurant industry, a mapping of community organizations and social services in Southern Alameda County, and an investigation of working conditions and turnover rates within newly federalized Bay Area airport security programs.

The *Community Scholars Course* is one of the Labor Center's new initiatives to institutionalize the presence of labor issues in the university curriculum. The Center plans to offer the course annually, and continue to deepen our relationships with students and social activists through our Labor Summer internship and other new programs.



STEVEN PITTS

LABOR MOVEMENT FRONTIERS:

Organizing the Child Care Workforce

BY JENYA CASSIDY, LABOR PROJECT FOR WORKING FAMILIES

"I hate the word babysitter!" says Marva Lyons, a family day care provider in Alameda, California. "It shows so little respect and understanding of what we do. People think we're just letting the kids watch TV all day. Let me tell you, there is a lot more to this job than some people realize—you are an educator, and sometimes a social worker. Families depend on us. Without us the parents couldn't function, without us where would the kids go? We are the glue that holds things together."

Child care teachers and providers like Marva play a vital role in the California economy, in working families' lives, and in the healthy development of young children. Yet child care remains a low-wage, high-turnover industry in which employees regularly work 9- to 11-hour days and the majority have no health benefits. Less than 5 percent of the child care workforce is represented by a union.

Recently, labor interest in organizing child care workers has grown, spurred in part by successes in other low-wage industries such as home health care and bike messengers, and campaigns such as the Living Wage movement. At the same time, there has been a movement of child care workers toward unions and other organizations. Child care teachers seek support for professional development, health benefits, higher compensation and respect for the work they do.

"If I counted all of the time I worked, my pay would come to about 75 cents an hour!" Marva says. Ursula Sanders, an Oakland family child care provider, agrees: "The children are here from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. But it doesn't really end there—I spend all my time after work doing work-related paperwork, shopping at Home Depot for equipment, and buying snacks for the kids. I buy milk like it's going out of business!" Despite the long hours, both women love their jobs and claim they wouldn't do anything else for a living. They have also joined the

(Continued on page 11)

PHOTOGRAPH BY AMY HICKS



Marva Lyons is a leader in the growing movement to improve the child care field in California.

Strengthening University and Labor Partnerships

In my first message as the new Chair, I want to extend a heartfelt thanks to the individuals who make the work we do at the Labor Center possible.



KATIE QUAN
Labor Center Chair

My first thanks goes to Carol Zabin, our former Chair and now Associate Chair, for her leadership and commitment to building the Labor Center. Carol is an economist who chose to settle at the Labor Center to fulfill her vision of ensuring that academic endeavors serve broader society and the pursuit of social justice. She took over the reins of Chair just as the Institute for Labor and Employment (ILE) was created, and shepherded us through the process of building a new, bigger, and more effective organization.

My second round of thanks goes to our Labor Center Advisory Board, made up of both union leaders and academics. At a time when the state budget crisis threatened our very existence, they have extended themselves consistently and forcefully in support of labor research and education, made their views known where it mattered, and helped insure that the Labor Center and its parent organization, the Institute for Labor and Employment, will live on to continue our work. These efforts were led by Tom Rankin and Art Pulaski of the California Labor Federation, along with staffers like Angie Wei and Lisa Ecks, and our Board president Shelley Kessler. We are truly grateful.

My third set of thanks goes to the Labor Center staff. Our staff, including both academic specialists and the administrative team, work long hours with unwavering dedication. If it were not for their innovative projects on topics ranging from strategies to engage young union members, organizing black workers, immigrants' rights, policies to advance the right to organize, and improving work and care standards in the human

services, our Center would not be at the forefront of research and education that empower workers and contribute to the labor movement.

As we move forward, we will strive to improve and expand our programs to develop synergy between academia and the labor movement. After many months of strategic planning with Advisory Board members and other consultants, we have emerged with a plan that deepens our relationships in the labor community, roots ourselves firmly in the university, and develops projects that bridge the worlds of academia and labor. Upcoming projects include research on the costs to taxpayers of low-income employment, a series of policy briefings for legislators and the media, a conference on participatory research, and a tool kit for organizing in export processing zones.

In the near future, we will no doubt face persistent challenges to preserve our place at the university. The Labor Center is not immune to the anti-labor sentiment so prevalent in some quarters of society. The only way that we will prevail will be with a concerted effort by labor and academic representatives to demonstrate that unions benefit not only their members, but all Californians, and that therefore taxpayer dollars should not just benefit business interests at the university, but workers and their unions as well.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Katie Quan'.

Protecting Worker Rights: A Turn Toward the State and Local Levels

It has become a common refrain among labor activists that national labor law reform is desperately needed. But given that political realities suggest a major overhaul is not likely in the near future, advocates are increasingly looking to the state and local levels as venues for policy reform to protect workers' rights. The power and size of state and local governments and their influence as regulatory bodies make them attractive sites for new initiatives. California, for example, is the world's 5th largest economy, fully seven percent of which comes directly from the state's \$1.3 billion budget, according to Sally Covington of the California Works Foundation. This June, the Labor Center organized a unique convening of legal experts, organizers, and academics to learn from the successes and failures of past efforts to implement pro-worker policy and to strategize for more effective work in the future.



Tom Rankin (left), President of the California Labor Federation, presents at the June 2003 State Policy and Organizing Conference.

“The power and size of state and local governments and their influence as regulatory bodies make them attractive sites for new workers’ rights initiatives.”

Foundation, and Institute for Labor and Employment, drew attention to a number of other promising strategies. One approach focuses on using state policy to expand unionization rights to sectors in which the current structure of work prevents organizing and collective bargaining. Following the recent success of the historic multi-union effort to restructure the home care industry in California, which allowed more than 150,000 workers to join unions and improve wages and benefits, participants presented strategies to restructure employment for child care and other human service workers.

Other strategies explored at the conference include using state contracts as leverage to improve working standards at companies doing business with the state; improving enforcement of employment law through new legislation or funds created through collective bargaining; requiring local economic development projects to serve community needs; and implementing creative approaches for organizing the growing population of independent contractors.

Notes Labor Center Specialist Ken Jacobs, “While the labor movement continues to push for more sweeping national reform, these sorts of creative, coordinated efforts at the state and local levels are important tools to create a climate in which workers’ rights and the right to self organization are respected.”

There is a long history of policy advocacy by unions and community groups at the state and local levels. For decades, state policies such as prevailing wage laws, project labor agreements, and responsible contractor laws have helped ensure high workplace standards in the building trades and other industries. More recently, unions and community groups have won campaigns to establish municipal and county living wage ordinances and anti-sweatshop procurement laws.

The State Policy and Organizing Conference, co-sponsored with the Labor Center by the California Labor Federation, California Works

A HEALTHIER ECONOMY:

More Jobs with Health Benefits Would Improve the Budget and State Economy

Between 2001 and 2002, half a million Californians lost their health insurance, due to spiraling healthcare costs combined with a weak labor market. In all, 6.7 million Californians lack health insurance. Illnesses and injuries cause crushing financial burdens for families without health insurance. Nearly half of all personal bankruptcies are due to health problems or looming medical bills.



by **ARINDRAJIT DUBE**
Institute for Labor and
Employment

In response to this growing crisis, there are now a number of proposals in California to insure the uninsured. Particularly promising are proposals that would increase work-based coverage, such as the labor-supported California Senate Bill 2. Fully 80 percent of the uninsured are workers or their dependents. Given this fact, passage of a work-based coverage policy would significantly reduce the size of the uninsured population. My recent research suggests that increasing the number of California jobs that offer health benefits would not only improve the health of workers and their families, but would also help address the state's budget woes and boost worker productivity.

Prescription for a Healthier Budget

As the number of people with employer-based health coverage has fallen, more families have needed to rely on taxpayer-supported safety net programs such as Medi-Cal. *More than half* of the 6 million Medi-Cal enrollees are "working family members"—that is, people who are either employed or are dependents of employed persons. Of the non-elderly, non-disabled Medi-Cal population, fully *72 percent* are members of working families. Enrollment of members of working families in Medi-Cal costs the state at least \$2.8 billion per year.

Lack of adequate healthcare coverage is not only a problem for workers at small businesses. Over 700,000 Medi-Cal enrollees are employees or their dependents of companies that employ at least 1,000 people. These enrollees alone cost the state \$610 million. An additional 440,000 are employees or their dependents of mid-size firms

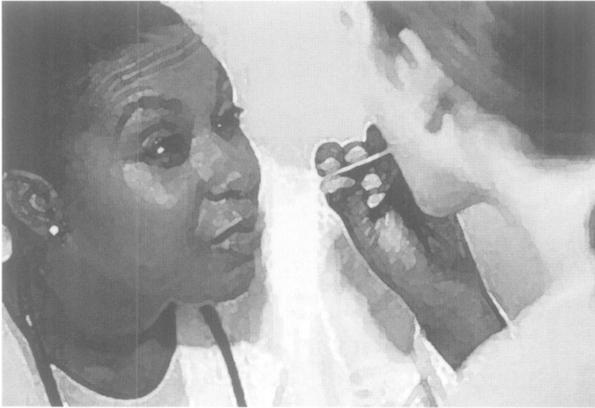
with 100 to 1,000 employees, and cost the state \$355 million in Medi-Cal. It is striking that so large a number of Medi-Cal enrollees work at large businesses, since such businesses could fairly easily absorb the added costs of providing healthcare coverage for their employees.

Overall, a policy requiring employers to pay their share for healthcare coverage for low-wage families can save billions of taxpayer dollars, make a significant dent in the size of the uninsured population, and pass the political reality test.

“Increasing the number of California jobs that offer health benefits would not only improve the health of workers and their families, but would also help address the state’s budget woes and boost worker productivity.”

Curing “Job Lock” and Increasing Productivity

Work-based healthcare coverage is such a precious commodity that some workers forego promising job opportunities and remain in less suitable jobs simply for fear of losing their health insurance. This is called “job lock” and it affects not only the job satisfaction of the “locked” workers, but also overall workforce productivity. Expanding health coverage at the workplace can



Arindrajit Dube's research explores the benefits of expanding job-based healthcare in California.

greatly reduce job lock and thereby improve productivity.

In 2002, 2.3 percent of the California workforce—or 179,000 workers—with employment-based health coverage would have made productivity-improving job changes absent job lock. Annually, the presence of job lock leads to \$772 million in foregone productivity gains. By allowing job-locked individuals to make productivity-improving job changes, policy reforms requiring greater employer coverage would help create a “productivity dividend”—which would partly offset any increases in labor costs resulting from covering more workers.

Needless to say, extending health insurance has an important impact on health outcomes. Better health, in turn, allows people to stay in the workforce and contribute to the state economy. Poor health caused by a lack of health insurance results in 12,000 fewer people working each year in California. Insuring working-age adults can increase gross state product by \$230 million annually through improvements in health.

Breaking the Vicious Cycle for Employers

Extending health coverage to working families can also level the playing field for employers. As health costs rise, employers get caught in a vicious cycle: gutting health benefits to cut costs puts pressure on competitors to do the same. Recent analysis of the California Establishment Survey (funded by the UC Institute for Labor and Employment) shows that 90 percent of employers

who do not offer health benefits are in markets where their competitors also deny workers such coverage. Significantly, over 35 percent of such employers would offer health coverage if their competitors did the same. This competitive pressure on employers creates individual incentives to do that which they would not want to do collectively—shortchange the health of workers and their family members. Requiring all or most employers to provide insurance would break this counterproductive cycle and stabilize our employment-based healthcare system.

“Work-based healthcare coverage is such a precious commodity that some workers forego promising job opportunities and remain in less suitable jobs simply for fear of losing their health insurance.”

Toward a Healthy California

Policies that increase job-based health coverage can be good for the budget and the state economy, and can take workers' health out of the competition. Of course, such a reform does not address the full breadth of the healthcare crisis, and other steps are needed to contain costs and extend coverage to all uninsured people. Ultimately, reform might entail a more complete overhaul of the way our society finances healthcare. But given the current reliance on the workplace for health insurance and the current political climate, extending coverage through jobs could be an important step towards building a healthier California.

Recalling the Fair Bear Minimum Wage at UC Berkeley



by SARA SMITH
UC Berkeley Alumna

This Fall, UC and CSU students are being slapped with a 30 percent increase in tuition, while community college students are having to pay as much as 64 percent more for their courses. As higher education costs skyrocket, more students are having to look for more work to help make ends meet. Indeed, since the 1960s, California has seen a steady increase in the numbers of students working and their overall hours worked. This rise of the working student has transformed not just the college experience but also the very structure of the state's economy, as industries from grocery and retail, to clerical work, to food and delivery service have increasingly shifted from career to temporary, often student workforces.



and STUART TANNOCK
UC Berkeley
School of Education

The Labor Center recently ran a research course for Berkeley undergraduates, co-taught by Stuart Tannock and Sara Flocks, that investigated issues facing working students. Participants in the course studied the experiences of resident assistants, work study students, student interns, student athletes, and students working in businesses along the Telegraph Avenue strip. Course participant Sara Smith looked to UC Berkeley's own past for inspiration on ways to address the needs of contemporary working students. Sara's research recalls the mostly forgotten story of the Fair Bear Minimum Wage, created by students at Berkeley in 1938 during another period of economic downturn and rising student financial duress.

Although dating from another era, Fair Bear potentially holds great relevance for us today. High turnover rates and scattered worksites make student workers notoriously difficult to organize. The Fair Bear program demonstrates the possibility of harnessing the power of the university and its student body to impact the practices of surrounding businesses and improve the work lives of the students these businesses employ.

* * * * *



We agree to maintain ASUC Labor Board standards for student employees. Issued subject to agreed regulations till September 1, 1940

SOURCE: THE DAILY CALIFORNIAN, JANUARY 31, 1940

In September 1939, the Labor Board of the Berkeley campus ASUC (student government) called for a boycott of Drake's, a local restaurant, after finding that the establishment was in violation of the Board's "Fair Bear Work Standards" for treatment of student workers. Despite complaints from the Board, Drake's management was persisting with an indefinite "apprenticeship period" that paid student workers substandard wages, and was also failing to pay student employees proper overtime compensation. The boycott lasted one week. After losing much of its clientele, Drake's—along with seven other stores that had been labelled by the Board as "unfair employers"—quickly promised to comply with Fair Bear standards.

The Drake's boycott is an example of the effectiveness of the remarkable Fair Bear student worker program that was launched at UC Berkeley in January 1938, and that persisted, with ups and downs, through the early 1960s. Fair Bear consisted of a set of minimum standards for working students that covered such areas as scheduling, breaks and uniform policies, and the treatment of apprentices and students who worked in exchange for room and board. The

standards established a minimum wage for students that, when first introduced, raised Berkeley students' earnings by an average of 30 percent; by the early 1950s, the Fair Bear Wage was reportedly the highest student wage in the country.

Local businesses in compliance with Fair Bear standards received a placard that was displayed prominently in storefront windows and doors. ASUC Labor Board posters and ads encouraged students to patronize shops that had the placard, while the ASUC itself refused to buy or accept advertising from unfair stores. The campus job placement office declined to send students to businesses operating below Fair Bear standards. When facing intransigent employers, the Labor Board (and at times, independent student activist groups on campus) called for boycotts or even picketing. Such measures could clearly be effective: at its high point in the late 1930s, the Fair Bear program included over 90 percent of student employers in the campus vicinity.

In December 1944, a provision prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, creed or color in employment was added to the Fair Bear standards—leading to some of the greatest controversy and conflict in the program's history. Not long after the provision was adopted, a newly-formed group of student activists calling themselves the Independent Committee for the Enforcement of Fair Bear picketed Jack's, a local restaurant, in protest over its racist hiring practices. This action, though successful in changing hiring policies at Jack's, led subsequently to a concerted effort on the part of campus area employers to repudiate Fair Bear, on the grounds

that student picketing was an inappropriate activity. Only under pressure from the ASUC and the general Berkeley student body did the merchants lose their initiative, and Fair Bear would be preserved for another two decades.

Fair Bear brought about alliances between Berkeley students and organized labor. John L. Lewis, president of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), declared in 1939 that the Fair Bear standards were a model that should be emulated by campuses across the country. And in 1940, when local members of the Culinary Workers Union went out on strike, Berkeley students and the ASUC Labor Board refused to scab at the restaurant—a significant event considering that it had long been common practice in the country for employers to turn to college students as replacement workers in times of labor disputes.

The exact reasons behind the eventual demise of the Fair Bear program are not entirely clear. One of the program's major limitations was its neglect of non-student workers. More generally, Fair Bear, to be effective, required constant monitoring and organizing to keep up employer participation, program enforcement, and improvement of the Fair Bear Minimum Wage and other standards so as to maintain their relevance and value. The historical record in the 1940s and 1950s is replete with Berkeley student government leaders and other student activists pledging to renew and revive the Fair Bear program. Some of these efforts were successful, while others evidently were not—for by the mid-1960s, Fair Bear had disappeared from Berkeley altogether.



SOURCE: THE DAILY CALIFORNIAN, MARCH 9, 1948

Labor Education News

In the past several months, the Labor Center has launched a host of exciting new programs. In May, we rolled out a Media Strategies workshop. This two-part course featured lessons for developing and delivering the unions' messages to the media, including frank discussions with Bay Area press and media representatives and on-camera interview practice.

In June, the Labor Center hosted a gathering of Bay Area labor educators to de-brief and follow-up on the annual conference of the United Association of Labor Educators (UALE), held this past April in Miami. Katie Quan shared the results of a new Labor Center-funded survey on the State of Labor Education throughout the United States that was carried out by Barbara Byrd of the University of Oregon and Bruce Nissen of Florida International University. The report can be found on our website at: <http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu>. AFL-CIO field representative Paul Krissel shared plans for a new training program for Central Labor Council leadership and staff. For more information on the program, contact Paul at pkrisse@compuserve.com.

On September 1, 2003, labor educator specialist Warren Mar began a one-year leave of absence. We are pleased to announce that Raahi Reddy, former organizing director of SEIU Local 715, will fill the position in Warren's absence.

The Labor Center's offerings for this Fall and early Spring include:

- Nov 21 & 22, 2003 Financial Skills
- Jan 12-16, 2004 Strategic Campaigns
- April 2004 Labor Economics
- May 2004 Media Strategies

New posters are now available featuring a complete list of educational offerings from the UC Berkeley and UCLA Labor Centers. For copies contact Julica Fitzpatrick at (510) 643-4150 or visit the Labor Center website for an online list: <http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu>. For more information contact Kamal Sidhu at (510) 643-7089.

Update from City College of San Francisco Labor Studies — by Bill Shields

The report from City College Labor is full of good news in a difficult time. Like all our sister programs, we've suffered budget cuts. Our students must pay more for classes and that's hurting them. Thanks to their efforts rallying by the thousands last Spring in Sacramento, though, the pain has been limited.

Perhaps because of the times, enrollment for our credit classes—particularly our history class "Who Built America?"—is up this semester. With these classes we're getting a labor message out to union activists, transfer students and vocational students, hoping to pave the way for future organizing efforts with them.

Our partnered classes include a second round of health and safety training for Local 22's Asian Carpenters Training Program at our Evans Campus. This is an exciting collaboration preparing Asian workers for apprenticeship status and good-paying union jobs in construction, where discrimination has long kept Asians and other workers of color underrepresented.

We are also partnering with the Chinese Progressive Association and the college's ESL program to offer a workers' rights-based approach to learning English at CPA's San Francisco Chinatown office. This will include instructional materials developed by the Labor Center, another example of program-to-program cooperation.

Finally, the City College/Laney "Rockin' Solidarity Labor Heritage Chorus" was on stage with a multicultural musical crew to celebrate Labor Day at Yerba Buena Gardens in the city. The Labor Day spirit will continue through the Fall with the exhibit, "At Work, The Art of California Labor" at the California Historical Society, which runs through December.

That's it from the West Bay. Come visit or give us a holler, especially for classes customized to the needs of your local or group. Contact: Bill Shields at (415) 550-4380 or wshields@ccsf.edu.

Labor Summer Program Rolls Forward

Now in its third year, the Labor Center's Labor Summer program trains and places UC students in intensive two-month internships with Bay Area unions and community groups. The program has placed more than 90 students at more than 70 sites. This year, of the participating 28 students, 13 accepted full- or part-time employment with their hosts beyond the internship, a rate even higher than in previous years. Here are the voices of some of this year's participating students.



ANGELIQUE AGLORO, an undergraduate student at UC Berkeley, interned with SEIU 817 on a project reaching out to public sector workers.

I wouldn't trade this experience for anything in the world. It's been a great experience. We learn about a lot of

social justice issues in class, but here we're going out into the real world and applying them to really help people. I grew up in a working class home, with two parents working trying to make ends meet, so I can really relate to what I'm seeing and the people I'm meeting through this work. I like

"I wouldn't trade this experience for anything in the world."

that I can go home at the end of the day with a clear conscience, knowing that I helped people and did good in the world.



RASHAD SHABAZZ, a graduate student at UC Santa Cruz, interned with the UFCW Local 1179, working on a project to involve young grocery workers.

It was great to work with the grocery workers. They are an amazing group of people and I learned so much from them

about what's going on in the community. The experience really grounded me and helped me focus on why I do what I do in school and how



Labor Summer Class of 2003

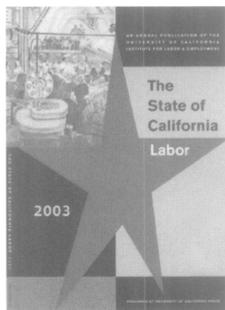
important it is for academia to ground itself outside of the campus walls. If you're interested in social change and in learning, this is an amazing opportunity to do both.

MONICA HERNANDEZ, an undergraduate student at UC Berkeley, interned with People Organized to Win Employment Rights on a project researching the domestic workers industry in San Francisco.



One of the things I like most is working in the community, among low- and no-wage workers. It's something I can understand because I've been a no- or low-wage worker, and most of my family members are. For me, as a student, it's really meant putting theory into practice. I feel like it's a model for me to bring back home, to the border region, where we have so many problems with exploitation in the *maquiladoras*.

Products & Publications

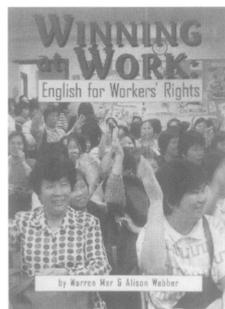


The State of California Labor 2003

An annual publication of the UC Institute for Labor and Employment, published by the journals division of the University of California Press. *The State of California Labor* is available online at www.ucop.edu/ile. Order printed copies at: www.ucpress.edu.

"*The State of California Labor* is a must-read for every public official in the state, and indeed for people throughout the country who are concerned about public policy and the economic status of workers in the nation's bellwether state."

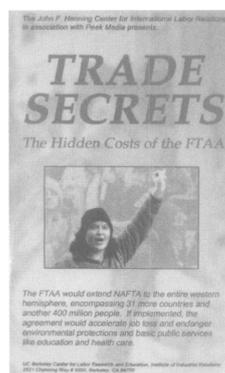
—Linda Chavez-Thompson,
Executive Vice President, AFL-CIO



Winning at Work: English for Workers' Rights

By Warren Mar and Alison Webber

A new pilot curriculum guide for English as a Second Language instructors in both community college and union settings that combines language learning with a detailed discussion of legal protections at work and exercises on how to protect those rights. The three chapters presented here focus on wage and hours laws.



Trade Secrets: The Hidden Costs of the FTAA

A short documentary about globalization and the Free Trade Area of the Americas

The FTAA would extend NAFTA to the entire Western Hemisphere, including 31 more countries and another 400 million people. The short film *Trade Secrets* explains in clear, concise language what the proposed trade agreement would mean for ordinary people, the environment, and our democracy. Includes a 40-page curriculum packet with fact sheets, role plays, and background materials.

These and other materials can be ordered on our website: <http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu>.

Coming Events

Financial Skills Workshop

Unions are complex organizations that face difficult management issues in financial planning and accounting. This two-day workshop is for chief officers and financial staff. *Friday and Saturday, Nov 21 and 22, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.*

Strategic Campaigns Workshop

Organizers enter with a problem and emerge with workable draft plans to: set up worker communication systems; identify clear campaign goals and objectives; develop strategy, tactics, and a timeline for the campaign. *Jan 12–16, Mon–Thurs, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.; Fri 8 a.m.–noon.*

Workshops will take place at the Institute of Industrial Relations, 2521 Channing Way, Berkeley. More information: <http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu>.

Student Research Grants

Fellowships for Masters Students carrying out research on labor issues. Due October 27th. For more information visit: <http://www.ucop.edu/ile/rfp>.

New Staff

RAAHI REDDY is a veteran labor organizer and most recently served as organizing director of SEIU Local 715. She has also played a key role in the development of the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance. She will serve in a temporary labor educator position, coordinating much of the Center's leadership development programs and campus outreach.



JENIFER MACGILLVARY will coordinate the Labor Center's development and external communications programs, and brings to the Center skills she honed at non-profit advocacy and training organizations in New York City.

Organizing the Child Care Workforce

(Continued from page 1) growing movement to change the working conditions in child care.

Marva became the Vice President of a family child care association and helped start a statewide network of teachers and providers focused on bringing the child care voice to legislative policy. Ursula joined the Alameda County Work and Family Coalition to fight for health benefits for child care providers. Both express an interest in what unions could do and how they would work in the child care field.

Organizing child care could prove labor's biggest challenge yet. According to Marcy Whitebook, Director of the Center for Child Care Employment at UC Berkeley, there are many challenges to unionizing the field. The prevalence of small, independent, isolated shops makes the workforce hard to reach and unify, and therefore less attractive to unions. (Exceptions include for-profit chains, Head Start, and school district-run programs.) Many in the workforce are home-based providers without "employers." And since most child care is not publicly subsidized, increased compensation must be borne largely by parents, many of whom are already paying high fees.

There also exists a wariness and anti-union sentiment in the child care workforce. Concerns include the possible loss of autonomy, interference from the union in relationships with families of the children in their care, and the ability to stay connected to the larger child care worker movement beyond the scope of a single union.

Despite these concerns, there appears to be a growing, if cautious, openness to unions in the child care field. "People are moving more toward unions—but there is still a fear of the unknown," says Marva. "What we want most is to have input regarding the laws that affect our profession. Unions have the power of being heard." Among recent developments:

- AFSCME, SEIU and AFT are actively organizing child care workers in California.
- ACORN is organizing family child care providers in five California communities.
- The Work and Family Coalition of Alameda

County, a labor-community coalition, is conducting "pre-organizing" of child care workers around health care issues.

- The Center for the Child Care Workforce merged in November 2002 with the AFT Educational Foundation in Washington.
- The California Child Development Corps, a new advocacy network of child care teachers and providers, has been representing the field in policy sessions in Sacramento.

In 2001, the Labor Project for Working Families, the Labor Center, and the California Labor Federation convened a group of union leaders and child care advocates to grapple with the issues that make child care organizing a special challenge. Their meetings strengthen relationships between the unions and child care allies as they collaborate on legislative strategies that will benefit the child care workforce. This group has formed the VOICE coalition—an alliance of child care advocates, unions, child care worker organizations and other groups—to improve the quality of child care programs and jobs, as well as parents' access to affordable child care.

“Family Child Care teachers don’t always see the need for unions. There is a lot of pride in having our own business and being in control of our fate. But are we?”

"I am glad that the VOICE Coalition brings unions and child care together. To change what's wrong with the child care system we need powerful allies," says Rosie Kennedy, President of the San Francisco Child Care Association and organizer for the United Child Care Union (an AFSCMC affiliate). "Family child care teachers don't always see the need for unions. There is a lot of pride in having our own business and being in control of our own fate. But are we? We don't control reimbursement rates, we don't have a voice in licensing and legislation that affects our working lives. Having a union can give us that voice and the power to make child care a better job."

On the Move

is published semi-annually by the Center for Labor Research and Education. Our goal is to improve the lives of working people through research and educational programs designed to build the capacity of the California labor movement.

Editor: Jeremy Blasi.

Editorial Board: Katie Quan and Jenifer MacGillvary.

To subscribe, contact us at (510) 642-0323 or email laborcenter@uclink.berkeley.edu.

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Labor Summer Voices

Exhibit

Union Women's Alliance to Gain Equality (1971 to 1982)

An exhibit of photographs by Cathy Cade
UC Berkeley Institute of Industrial Relations
August 20, 2003 – January 16, 2004



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2521 Channing Way
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