

LABOR CENTER REPORTER

BERKELEY, CA 94720
(415) 642-0323

Number 43

July 1981

BAY AREA LABOR EDUCATION CONFERENCES

One of the responsibilities of the Center for Labor Research and Education at U.C. Berkeley is to develop new ideas, materials, and resources that will help trade unionists carry out their own responsibilities. One way of doing this is through the assistance we give to the development and teaching of regular courses in educational institutions - especially in the community colleges. LCR #42, which accompanies this issue, reports in more detail about this approach.

Another way of seeking to meet the educational needs of trade unionists is through the scheduling of short conferences (of an evening or a day or two), and educational institutes or workshops (of three or four days in duration). Program funds for such education have been cut out of the regular University of California budget. But the need for this kind of special education has continued to increase.

Recently, Paul Chown was appointed Acting Chairman of the Labor Center at U.C. Berkeley. (We hope that Norm Amundson, our former Chairman, will be returning soon to help all of us at the Center with labor education programs.) One of Paul's interests in labor education is to revive the conference approach to subjects and issues of current concern to trade unionists. Therefore, the Labor Center staff is planning a series of special programs, with one to be given each month (usually at the end of the month) between September and next May.

At this time, we have set up the time and place and the subject matter only for the first of these conferences in September. That will be on Reagan's economic policies and their impact on unions and working people. An announcement giving further details of this conference is enclosed. We will include similar announcements of the future conferences in our mailings of the Labor Center Reporter.

We would be pleased to hear from any of our readers about the following special conference schedule, which we will be working on for September, 1981, through May, 1982:

1. September 25 (all day Friday) and 26 (Saturday morning):
REAGONOMICS: THE IMPACT ON UNIONS, WORKING PEOPLE, AND THE NEEDY
At the Alumni House, U.C. Berkeley Campus

The Friday morning program will analyze our present economic problems, the impact of the Reagan Administration tax cuts and increase in military spending, and what is going to be a rapid re-distribution of income in this nation from the poor to the rich.

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On Friday afternoon, we'll break down the subject matter into areas of special interest and concern, and provide resource people for several workshops. On Saturday, we'll turn to the political implications of Reagonomics, and explore particularly what kinds of options and responses are available to labor.

2. October: TRAINING OF SHOP STEWARD TRAINEES: 3-4 days

This program will deliver materials, ideas and approaches for the use of union officials in teaching their own shop stewards - especially about grievance handling up to and including the arbitration stage. There will be an emphasis both on relevant materials and on teaching techniques. We will also invite people to take this course so as to create a list of experienced trade unionists who will be available to teach shop stewards classes for other unions under the guidance of the Labor Center staff.

3. November: ECONOMIC ISSUES IN BARGAINING: 1-2 days

This is not about our economic problems, but about the use of arithmetic and statistics and sources, as they are needed for bargaining cost of living or health care or pension coverage, and for determining the comparative costs of proposed benefits, and for finding and understanding data about the employer and how he is organized and what he can afford to pay.

4. December: COST OF LIVING ADJUSTMENT CLAUSES: 1 day

This is a practical down-to-the bargaining table program. Classes include working out practical problems; applying various clauses, examining in detail what the CPI tells us and what it doesn't; discussing the features and safeguards you want in a COLA clause; writing a COLA clause; avoiding pitfalls and boobytraps.

5. January: COLLECTIVE BARGAINING SIMULATION: 4 days

You practice the strategy and tactics of collective bargaining by working on a problem, and watching how you do on video-tape replay. Our game plan requires a lot of research to get a decent contract, and part of the training in this program is about sources, and about adequate preparation and presentation of your position.

6. February: WOMEN'S ISSUES IN COLLECTIVE BARGAINING: 2 days

Equal pay, comparable worth, equal employment opportunity, sexual harassment, flexible scheduling, child care facilities, job sharing, and job sharing unemployment insurance, health and safety are some of the issues to be covered. The emphasis will be on materials, data, and approaches needed in collective bargaining - more than on legislative issues.

7. March: ALTERNATIVES TO TRADITIONAL ARBITRATION: 1½ - 2 days

There are successful alternatives to traditional grievance arbitration that are less expensive, less time consuming, and more protective of the basic rights and interests of the grievant. We want to hear directly from unions that have developed these alternatives. Also, there is more need now for alternatives to the traditional methods of settling interest disputes - especially, alternatives to the strike when the odds are too great against the union. We are exploring the idea of covering this aspect of "alternatives" as well.

8. April: COMMUNICATIONS FOR UNION LEADERSHIP: 3-4 days

There is so much to cover that this should take a week - including parliamentary procedure; use of the media; writing grievances or letters to Congress or minutes of meetings or strike publicity or resolutions for the International convention; keeping appropriate records, especially for grievances that may go to arbitration; polling the membership; formulating collective bargaining demands; and communicating with the membership.

9. May: UNION STRUCTURE AND ADMINISTRATION

The world has changed much faster than the unions have. It would be nice to slow up the world, but otherwise, there must be accommodations - through changing jurisdictional lines, through mergers, in organizing and negotiating and strike procedures, in the way the union staff is organized and managed, even in dues collection and office accounting and managing procedures. Many changes are going on all around us. We want to develop more information about the needs and about the solutions that it will make most sense to implement.