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PAY EQUITY RESOURCE CENTER

4 [by Pamela Tellew]

Good news for unions working towards pay equity -- the Labor Center has established a Pay Equity Resource Center (PERC), which can provide union representatives and others with information on how to bargain for and implement pay equity, also known as comparable worth. Pay equity is a strategy to raise wages in occupations which are underpaid because they are traditionally held by women and minorities. (See LCR #31, #44, and #169.)

PERC will build upon a strong foundation laid by the Oakland-based Comparable Worth Project. When this Project closed its doors last year, the Project's extensive files were given to the Labor Center. Through PERC the Labor Center will continue the Comparable Worth Project's function of promoting pay equity. PERC will be dedicated to encouraging the active involvement of labor organizations in the struggle to achieve pay equity.

Union Activity on Pay Equity Issues -- California unions have been at the forefront in bringing the pay equity issue before the public. Organizations of library workers up and down the state brought the issue before city councils and universities during the 1970s. One of the first employee-initiated wage gap studies was conducted in 1971 by library workers on the UC Berkeley campus. Unions, particularly SEIU and AFSCME locals, have since then pressured public employers to conduct either formal or informal wage gap studies.

California public sector unions led the nation in taking pay equity to the streets. The country's first "comparable worth" strike was won by AFSCME Local 101 against the City of San Jose in 1981. As a result, some job classifications have been adjusted for pay equity by as much as twenty percent. Unions have gained pay equity adjustments through more peaceful collective bargaining procedures. Negotiated agreements which contain pay equity adjustments include those between the Long Beach City Employees Association and the city of Long Beach; AFSCME locals and the cities of Los Angeles, Belmont, and San Carlos; and SEIU locals and Contra Costa County and the city of Berkeley. In San Francisco, SEIU Locals 790, 250, and 535 (representing 13,000 of the city's 23,000 employees) recently negotiated a \$35.4 million pay equity adjustment with the Board of Supervisors and the Mayor. (A pay equity study compiled by the city's Civil Service Commission has identified discrepancies which average forty to fifty percent in salaries paid to classifications dominated by women and minorities.) In many of these cases, unions worked in coalitions with women's groups, community organizations, minority groups, and other unions to achieve pay equity victories.

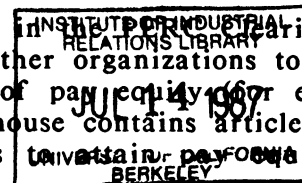
But these and other unions still have far to go to achieve pay equity. In many cases where adjustments have been made, they have been only partial. Most public employers and almost all private employers haven't yet responded to workers' pay equity demands.

The PERC Clearinghouse and Catalog -- The Pay Equity Resource Center can help unions in their efforts to achieve pay equity. PERC maintains a Clearinghouse which contains more than 250 items relating to pay equity. These items are listed in PERC's new catalog. (See coupon below to order the catalog.)

Many items of interest to unions are currently included in the PERC Clearinghouse catalog. These include materials prepared by unions and other organizations to inform union members, employers, and the public about the issue of pay equity (for example, leaflets from a Canadian pay equity strike). The Clearinghouse contains articles which analyze the effectiveness of collective bargaining strategies to attain pay equity (for

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example, William F. Kay and M. Carol Stevens, "An Outline of Potential Problems Involving Public Sector Collective Bargaining and the Concept of Comparable Worth"). Also included in the Clearinghouse are pay equity proposals presented by unions to government agencies.

Perhaps most valuable to unions working on pay equity are copies of job evaluation studies conducted at public sector workplaces around the country. These studies (sometimes called wage-gap studies, reclassification studies, or compensation studies) are used to determine compensation of a job based on evaluation of the skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions required by the job. More than two-thirds of non-agricultural workers in the U.S. were covered by some form of job evaluation system in 1986. Job evaluation studies used for pay equity purposes compare the compensation of jobs held primarily by women and minorities to jobs of similar skill, effort, responsibility, and working conditions held primarily by non-minority men. It is important that unions understand how employers have job evaluations in the past so that they can work to insure that job evaluations are used equitably in the future. The job evaluation studies available from the PERC Clearinghouse are valuable learning tools for union representatives advocating pay equity.

The PERC Clearinghouse Catalog explains how to order these and other items from the Clearinghouse. The cost of the catalog is \$3.00. Use the order form below.

Unions are invited to submit any materials collected during their own pay equity efforts. We are particularly interested in contract language on pay equity and job evaluation studies in which unions participated. To share these items with other unions and the public, send them to:

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--Pamela Telles

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