

REPORTER

INFORMATION SOURCES FOR LABOR PART II: COMMERCIAL DATABASES

by Terence K. Huwe

In the *Labor Center Reporter* no. 290 (April, 1994), we explored the world of print-based information resources. Part II focuses on the world of commercial databases, valuable research tools that are increasingly accessible to the average citizen.

Commercial databases can be thought of as "toll lanes" on the Information Superhighway. Some started out as in-house systems for defense contractors or publishers of legal and financial information. Lockheed was one early pioneer, with its Dialog Information Service (now owned by Knight-Ridder). Other big players include West Publishing Company, purveyors of WESTLAW, and its archival, Elevesier Reed's Lexis/Nexis. These vendors of online information have been enormously profitable and have created niche markets for instant access to information.

Until recently, if the average citizen needed some online searching, he or she would contact a librarian, or "information broker". During the 1980s, "end-user" searching emerged and grew in popularity. Many database companies now offer training to anyone willing to pay. Vendors are also striving to make their systems simpler to use. "Natural language", "virtual agents" and other innovations are beginning to appear, but the jury is still out on whether they will save users time and money. Meanwhile, experienced online searchers agree on a simple caveat. If you want to conduct your own online research, the clock is running while you are logged on, and you should know what you are doing.

Do labor researchers need to know about online searching, or can they manage by depending on the

experts? Most will have to decide for themselves. The cost of training is high, and there are plenty of people who will help for a fee. But new ways of accessing databases are emerging, creating some cost-effective options. By exploring these options, community-based researchers can de-mystify the electronic resources that management has long been used to. The library staff at the Institute of Industrial Relations recommends a plunge into the electronic ocean—with a little help from your friends.

This tour of databases focuses on pay-for-use services or their low-cost alternatives and leaves the world of Internet resources for future issues. The goal here is to describe commercial resources and how to beat the cost. Future issues of the *Labor Center Reporter* will give detailed tours of the Internet and "point" at resources of special interest to labor. We will address both the technical issues of Internet use and explain the searching skills that

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FROM THE CHAIR

I am very proud of the excellent *Labor Center Reporter* editorial board and the work they have done. Our periodic Labor Center Update will be incorporated in the *LCR* in the future. The Labor Center has continued to offer excellent services despite severe budget cutbacks. John Sladkus has been offering training for unions in the use of computer technology, and we will offer a day-long conference on Gateways to the Information Superhighway on December 10. I have continued offering training on teaching techniques, strategic planning, one-on-one organizing and sexual harassment. Our annual conference on Labor-Management Cooperation in the Public Schools, co-sponsored with CFIER, was a resounding success this year, and the second edition of *California Worker Rights* is essentially finished and should appear shortly after the first of the year.

One of the most exciting projects we have been involved in has been the innovative joint study

group project with HERE Local 2, SEIU Local 14 and fourteen of the unionized hotels in San Francisco. Our Bay Area Labor Studies Seminar series will include talks by former Steelworkers Union President Lynn Williams this winter and Professor Harley Shaiken in the Spring. Longer range plans include a summer school for young union leaders, a conference for union leaders on participating in the new American workplace and focused discussion groups for labor leaders at all levels of union leadership on forging the future of the labor movement.

Finally, I want to welcome our new Publications and Program Assistant, Elaine Meckenstock, to the Labor Center team. We are looking forward to involving many people in our exciting future!

Mary Ruth Gross

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CLRE is the Center for Labor Research & Education.

IIR is the Institute of Industrial Relations.

CCER is the Center for Community Economic Research.

WELCOME TO THE EDITORIAL BOARD

The LCR welcomes four new members to
the editorial board!

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Local 250 SEIU

Eric Borgerson

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California Public Employee Relations

Ron Teninty

Campaign Researcher

International Brotherhood of Teamsters

Catha Worthman

Researcher/Organizer

Local 250 SEIU

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.

TRADE UNIONS AND LABOR STRUGGLES IN THE 'NEW' SOUTH AFRICA

by Chris Benner

Introduction

On May 10th, when Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as the new president of South Africa, the world cheered. The event marked the end of 500 years of colonialism on the African continent and a major milestone in the struggle to end racism and

compromises with business put real limits on what trade unions have been able to achieve for their membership in the current period. Unions are responding by returning to the basic fundamentals, stressing a return to shopfloor organizing and democratic worker control.

With the advent of a new government, workers are now demanding that the political victory be translated into specific improvements in their wages and working conditions.

racial oppression in the world. But the event didn't mark the end of the struggle for equality and for workers rights in that country. South Africa still has one of the most unequal income distributions in the world, with 50 percent unemployment and absolute poverty in the midst of massive wealth.

Since the elections, the struggle for workers rights has accelerated. A wave of strikes has occurred in nearly every major sector of the economy, including the longest strike in the automobile industry in South Africa's history that was only resolved in early September, a major strike in the retail sector that broke out only three weeks after Mandela was inaugurated, and a large-scale strike in the trucking industry that crippled the transport routes throughout South Africa when truckers blocked the major highways. With the advent of a new government, workers are now demanding that the political victory be translated into specific improvements in their wages and working conditions. These strikes, however, conceal a deeper crisis in the union movement in South Africa—a crisis which has important lessons and implications for labor struggles in the U.S. and around the world. This article looks at the terrain of labor struggle in South Africa through an examination of the complex and contradictory conditions workers in that country face. The election of a new government has opened entirely new possibilities for improving workers lives. But changing economic conditions, organizational changes within the unions, and continuing

Brief History of Union Struggles in South Africa

South Africa currently has one of the strongest organized labor movements of any country in the world. Trade unions have existed in South Africa since the late 1800s. Black trade unions were entirely crushed during the 1960s, but reemerged in 1973 after a series of wildcat strikes, primarily in the clothing and textile industry in Durban, a major port and trading center. Through the 1980s, the union movement grew in strength and numbers, culminating in the formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in 1985. COSATU is the largest trade union federation in the country, comprising some 1.5 million workers, and has been the single strongest body that forced the apartheid regime to come to the negotiating table. There are a number of features of the labor movement in South Africa which have helped make it so powerful and influential. Worker Control: There is a strong culture of democracy and worker control in the union movement. Shop stewards play a central role in this culture, providing the link between workers on the shop floor and leadership within the unions. Union officials are all elected at union congresses, in which ordinary workers exercise absolute control. Between congresses, union officials are held accountable through the activities of a mobilized and highly politicized workers move-

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FACING FREE TRADE TOGETHER: US-MEXICAN UNION COOPERATION

by Clay Samford

Many in the American labor movement feared the passage of NAFTA marked the beginning of the end - that with a great "sucking sound" American manufacturers would rush south to exploit lax environmental laws, acquiescent unions, and a labor market willing to work for \$4 a day. While NAFTA poses many problems for some in the labor movement, to others it has provided opportunities. Unwilling to watch continued job loss and exploita-

the AFL-CIO to work with organizations outside the "official Mexican labor movement.

Since both the F.A.T. and the UE are independent labor organizations, the Strategic Organizing Alliance has managed to avoid entanglement with the "official" labor movement in either country. But since the vast majority of organized workers in Mexico and the U.S. belong to the official labor movement, the potential for truly effective international labor cooperation is severely limited.

Together the UE and the F.A.T. have developed a strategy of cooperation which may ultimately allow the American labor movement to address the problems free trade has brought to the American worker.

tion by American companies in Mexico, the unaffiliated United Electrical Workers (UE) have forged a unique alliance with the Frente Auténtico del Trabajo (F.A.T.), an independent workers confederation in Mexico. Together the UE and the F.A.T. have developed a strategy of cooperation which may ultimately allow the American labor movement to address the problems free trade has brought to the American worker.

Barriers to International Cooperation

The Mexican Labor Relations System

The Mexican labor relations system poses a serious obstacle to international union cooperation. Mexico's principal labor federation, the CTM, is closely linked to the Mexican government and has rarely opposed the government's support of free trade. In fact, throughout the past decade, the CTM has actively assisted the government in holding down real wages in order to attract foreign investment. Because of the relationship between the CTM and the Mexican government, CTM-affiliated unions are unwilling to build alliances with American unions who are interested in raising wages in Mexico or calling attention to the Mexican government's failure to enforce its own labor law. These obstacles are magnified by the reluctance of

The Chains of History

In many ways history poses the greatest obstacle to U.S. and Latin American labor cooperation. The American labor movement has traditionally approached Latin America from the standpoint that capitalist expansion and hegemony abroad is best for workers at home. This policy, fueled by opposition to the spread of communism, often led to the support of ineffective government backed "puppet unions" and repression of unions that truly represented their workers. Although this policy has declined as free trade has brought the interests of workers in the U.S. and workers abroad closer together, there remains a legacy of mistrust and misunderstanding that must be surmounted before any meaningful international labor cooperation can occur.

The Strategic Organizing Alliance

In 1992 the UE and the F.A.T. joined together to address the problems created by free trade, forming a "Strategic Organizing Alliance." The alliance is based on the simple proposition that through cooperation unions in both countries can negotiate more effectively with powerful multinational corporations. The Strategic Organizing Alliance aims to benefit workers in both countries by raising the living standards of Mexican workers to eliminate

the wage differential that encourages U.S. companies to move operations south of the border. Currently the alliance is focusing on helping F.A.T. affiliated unions organize "maquiladora" plants along the U.S.-Mexico border, plants where work once done by UE members is now being done at a fraction of the cost by Mexican workers. The alliance effectively utilizes the resources available to both unions: the F.A.T. provides the staff and does the actual organizing work, while the UE provides financial assistance, as well as expertise and information. Unionists on both sides have high hopes that eventually the alliance will enable them to build unions in the same companies operating in both the U.S. and Mexico and that aid and solidarity may one day flow in both directions.

Testing the Alliance

The UE-F.A.T. Alliance has not had to wait long for its first major test. The Alliance's attempts to organize a General Electric (GE) motor plant in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico have met with extreme employer resistance. The plant, Compañía Armadora or CASA, produces the same small motors that were once made by members of UE Local 924 in Decatur, Indiana. In November a delegation of American GE workers from UE locals traveled to Mexico to meet with CASA employees and discuss ways in which UE members in the United States could help Mexican workers organize a union. During their meetings, the Mexican workers reported a variety of labor violations, including obstruction of legitimate union organizing efforts, illegal dismissals, failure to pay proper overtime and a host of health and safety violations. On November 22, UE Secretary-Treasurer Amy Newell wrote to GE outlining these labor violations and requesting that the company investigate and rectify the situation.

The response at CASA was immediate and severe. On November 25, GE discharged 3 of the workers who had participated in the UE meetings. Manuel Gómez, an employee with 13 years of experience at GE, was fired for hosting a meeting of UE and CASA workers in his home, although the meeting was held on a Saturday after Manuel had finished working a seven hour overtime shift. Apolonio Talamantes was discharged for allegedly leaving his post to distribute union fliers inside the plant, although he was on vacation and nowhere near the plant at the time. Fernando Castro was dismissed for leaving his work station to participate in an interview with a MacNeil/Lehrer news team, although MacNeil/Lehrer conducted all interviews on his day off. This first round of discharges was accompanied on December 2 by the firing of five more workers for "refusing to obey an order of their supervisors." All five workers had participated in the November 6 meeting with the UE delegation.

Faced with such blatant repression the Strategic Organizing Alliance fought back. In mid February 1994 the UE began to draw national attention to the situation, by sponsoring an eleven city U.S. tour in which a fired worker from the CASA plant and Benedicto Martinez Orozco, a national leader of the F.A.T., traveled throughout the country speaking about chronic violations of workers rights in Mexico.

In pressing their complaint against GE, the UE also attempted to utilize the National Administrative Office (NAO), which was established by the NAFTA side accord on labor to address complaints concerning labor rights violations in the member countries. The NAO's treatment of the UE's complaint is not encouraging. The hearing was held in Washington, DC, making it difficult, if not impossible, for Mexican witnesses to testify, and for those

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UPCOMING PUBLICATION FROM THE LABOR CENTER

The long awaited second edition of California Workers Rights should be available in early January. CWR is an easy to read guide to employment rights guaranteed California workers by state and federal laws. The book explains each right and directs the reader to the appropriate enforcement agency. To receive the announcement of publication, either return the update card on the back page of this issue or call 510-642-0323 and ask to be put on the mailing list.

INTERNET UPDATE

Looking for labor information on the Net?

Back issues of the Labor Center Reporter, a list of publications and upcoming events, and more are available online on the Labor Center's new gopher. Gopher to violet.berkeley.edu port 2521.

The Economic Democracy Information Network (EDIN) gopher, run by the Center for Community Economic Research, was noted by *PC Computing* magazine as one of 29 highlights of the Internet because of its collection of labor information. Gopher to garnet.berkeley.edu port 1250.

Hot Tip for Corporate Research

Researching a corporation? The Net may be able to help you through the Securities Exchange Commission's online corporate database. The most useful file to search for is the corporation's "10-K," which lists all of the corporation's major operations, holdings, and subsidiaries. To get there, gopher to town.hall.org port 70 and look for the EDGAR database or web to <http://town.hall.org/edgar/edgar.html>.

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who did make the trip, testimony was limited to ten minutes. After this cursory examination, the NAO found no evidence that Mexico failed to enforce its labor laws, and dismissed the UE's complaint. The UE's case seems to indicate that, as it currently stands, the NAO may actually impede the struggle to prosecute labor violations under NAFTA.

Overcoming Obstacles

Despite the firings, the F.A.T. continued its organizing campaign and succeeded in gathering the support of a majority of CASA workers. When GE refused to negotiate, the F.A.T. threatened to strike and forced GE to concede to the "first-ever" secret ballot election in the maquiladora zone. In the face of massive unfair labor practices, including threats to close the plant and promises of wage increases, the F.A.T. lost the representation election. The Alliance, however, has not given up, and continues leafleting the plant and meeting with workers. The existence of a secret ballot election itself demonstrates the potential of international solidarity. As David Johnson, the UE's organizing liaison with the F.A.T. says, "we have succeeded in carving out a space for real democratic, rank-and-file unionism in the maquiladoras."

Lessons and Implications

Despite this seemingly insurmountable array of obstacles, the Strategic Organizing Alliance seems

to offer several valuable lessons for others interested in building international union alliances. First, an international alliance must have rank and file national support. The Strategic Organizing Alliance hits home with rank-and-file UE members because it focuses on organizing "run-away" plants that once employed UE members. Second, an effective international alliance must pursue its objectives on several fronts. In its attempt to organize the CASA plant, members of the Strategic Organizing Alliance simultaneously filed complaints with the NAO, conducted a tour to raise public awareness, and continued efforts at rank-and-file organization at CASA. So while the NAO proved to be a dead-end, they were able to force GE to hold a secret ballot election. Third, the Strategic Organizing Alliance demonstrates that positioning is critical. Despite the fact that both the UE and the F.A.T. are relatively small organizations, they have maximized their bargaining power by positioning themselves in high growth sectors of the Mexican economy, so that the Strategic Organizing Alliance is posed to play an increasingly powerful role as trade continues to expand. Although the Strategic Organizing Alliance has seen only limited success, it represents a creative response to the problems created by free trade, and is an effective first step on the road to international labor cooperation. As Amy Newell, the General Secretary-Treasurer of the UE, explains, "we need to look at the UE-F.A.T. alliance as one small step in what is a very huge and enormous process that will take decades to accomplish."

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are needed to explore the world of “networked information” with a minimum of struggle.

Database Types And When To Use Them

Most databases fall into two categories: indexing/abstracting and full text. Databases in the first category are simpler to use. Index databases are straight locators in electronic form; in many cases, they are electronic versions of reference books. Abstracting databases offer brief descriptions in addition to indexing. Searchers can quickly read the abstract and then discount the “hit” if it is irrelevant, saving time by a process of elimination. After searching bibliographic databases, the next step is to obtain the text, either at the library, or via a full-text database provider.

Full text databases offer all the indexing enhancements plus the actual text of the document. Whether the document is a book, article, text of a legislative act, you name it—the searcher receives the whole thing. Prices are higher and the billing structure varies among vendors, but researchers typically pay a fee for connect time, text (per line or document) and for each search. Both indexing/abstracting databases and full text databases can be searched by structured “fields” of information, allowing skilled searchers many ways to save time and money.

Database vendors are pleased when researchers start using their products frequently. The higher cost services (for example, the global “Omni” file on Nexis) can top \$300 per hour. Cheaper data-

The second question to ask is whether you stand a decent chance of finding what you want. To answer this one, you must be familiar with the advantages and limitations of the products. Information consumers should do their homework; at \$300 per hour, you cannot afford to make assumptions.

One of the most important allies you can have in conducting your own research is a librarian, or “information specialist” as they are being called nowadays. While the Internet and consumer-direct services like Compuserve and America Online are making the online world more accessible, even the most computer literate of researchers will benefit from counsel and advice at the library. Online research involves a learning curve, and the daily users of these systems know them best. Just as important, librarians can help you decide when to choose paper over databases.

College and Universities Offer Limited Access

Commercial databases are the “Rolls Royces” of the Information Superhighway. The good news is that economies of scale are bringing a free ride within reach of average folks. The best choice for access is at college and university libraries, which have begun adding databases to their electronic library catalogs and CD-ROM disks to their collections. For example, the University of California has added several databases to MELVYL, its nine-campus electronic library utility. MELVYL also offers “gateways” to other library resources via the Internet. This is an exciting development for all Californians, because MELVYL is fundamentally a public service of a public university. Anyone will-

One of the most important allies you can have in conducting your own research is a librarian, or “information specialist” as they are being called nowadays.

bases, such as Dialog’s Employee Benefits Infotrieve or PAIS International, are in the \$45-\$100 per hour range.

The most important question to ask is whether it is more cost-effective to perform the work manually in books. Stress, travel time and other factors should be weighed, since time is money. If the need is pressing, online searching can save lots of effort.

ing to travel in person to the libraries of the University of California may use MELVYL terminals to search certain commercial databases. What’s more, researchers can send search results to their electronic mailboxes, eliminating the arduousness of downloading to diskettes. Local rules apply and terminals are limited, but nonetheless, this is a significant value.

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Allowing on-site patrons to use licensed databases is a pragmatic compromise. It is neither logical nor practical to try screening patrons to find out exactly who has a University affiliation and then bar the ineligible patrons from services. Commercial database vendors assume that all library patrons doing research within the UC libraries will be viewed as UC affiliates. This attitude toward on-site use prevails widely throughout the United States; even Harvard University, a private institution, follows the same definition regarding use of commercial databases in campus libraries that are open to the general public.

Noteworthy Databases

(see also Table 1)

The following list is not complete, but it does bring together some of the most important sources of information. Costs and access points are included. This tour focuses on the services available on Dialog Information Services, Lexis/Nexis, UC's MELVYL, and Compuserve. Many of these files can also be found on CD-ROM disks in public libraries. To find out, call your local college or public library.

ABI/INFORM

ABI/INFORM, one of the oldest and largest electronic sources of business information, contains more than 500,000 citations. These citations provide complete bibliographic information, indexing, informative abstracts, and selected full-text articles from more than 1,000 business journals. More than half of those sources are indexed cover-to-cover and offer full text online. More than 350 are international journals that provide business news and analyses from around the world. Subjects include company news and analysis, employee management and compensation, management styles and corporate cultures, and economic conditions and forecasts.

ACCESS: Dialog, MELVYL, Compuserve (Knowledge Index).

Academic Index

Academic Index (called "MAGS" on MELVYL) provides indexing of more than 1,450 scholarly and general interest publications. Journals covered rep-

resent the most commonly held titles in over 120 college and university libraries. In 1993, Information Access Co. began entering selected full-text articles from 250 journals into the file with coverage beginning from January 1993. Academic Index includes indexing and abstracts (beginning in 1991) for articles, news reports, editorials on major issues, product evaluations, biographies, short stories, poetry, and reviews.

ACCESS: Dialog, MELVYL, Compuserve (Knowledge Index).

Current Contents

Current Contents presents the tables of contents from current issues of leading journals in the sciences, social sciences, and arts and humanities. In addition to providing access to the tables of contents, Current Contents also provides complete bibliographic records for each item. These items include articles, reviews, letters, notes and editorials.

ACCESS: Dialog, MELVYL.

D&B - Dun's Market Identifiers

D&B-Dun's Market Identifiers (DMI) presents detailed information on more than 7,500,000 U.S. business establishments. DMI contains current address, product, financial, and marketing information for each company. Both public and private companies are included, as well as all types of commercial and industrial establishments, and all product areas.

ACCESS: Dialog.

Employee Benefits InfoSource

Employee Benefits InfoSource provides a centralized resource for timely, comprehensive information about all facets of employee benefit plans. The database covers current and retrospective literature of interest to the employee benefits industry in the United States and Canada, as well as other countries around the world. Each record includes an abstract. Coverage includes medical and dental benefits, disability benefits, employee assistance plans, stock option plans, stock ownership plans, executive compensation, flexible benefit plans, group insurance, international benefits, labor relations, laws and legislation, personnel management, unemployment, wellness plans, and workers' compensation.

ACCESS: Dialog.

Table 1: Database Comparisons

DATABASE	TYPE	DIALOG CHARGES	RECOMMENDED USES
ABI/INFORM	Bibliographic Abstracts Full Text	\$2.20/connect minute \$1.40/full printed page	Obtain full text of: general information searches on business topics; Corporate cam- paigns Strategic Planning Product Information
Academic Index	Bibliographic Selected Full Text	\$1.50/connect minute \$1.80/full printed record	Bibliographic access to: General Information Major Social Issues Business Issues
Current Contents	Bibliographic Abstracts	\$1.70/connect minute \$2.50/full printed record	Bibliographic access to: Current Events Politics Business Issues
D & B - Duns Market Identifiers	Financial	\$1.60/connect minute \$3.25/full printed record	Financial Data: Corporate Information Officers' names & addresses Sales/Performance
Employee Benefits Info Source	Bibliographic Abstracts	\$1.60/connect minute \$.35/printed record	Bibliographic Access to: Human Resources Employee Benefits Workplace Developments
Knowledge Index	Bibliographic, Financial, and Full Text	\$.40/connect minute (\$24 per hour flat rate)	Menu-driven access to 150 of Dialog's data- bases at a flat rate
LaborLaw I	Bibliographic Legal Summaries	\$2.00/connect minute \$1.70/full printed record	Summary Information on Labor Issues, drawn from Labor Relations Reporter
LaborLaw II	Bibliographic Legal Summaries	\$2.00/connect minute \$3.80/full printed record	Indexes Federal, State & local administrative decisions pertaining to labor law
Lexis/Nexis	Legal Financial Full Text	\$1.00-6.00/connect minute	Full text legal decisions, statutes, and adminis- trative decisions Financial information Business information
PAIS International	Bibliographic	\$1.40/connect minute \$.50/printed record	Bibliographic Access to: Major Social Issues Government & Politics Labor & Employment Cites Books & Articles

Knowledge Index Via Compuserve

As interest in online searching grows among the general populace, mainstream vendors are increasing their offerings. Compuserve offers Knowledge Index, a selection of Dialog's databases for a flat fee. Compuserve subscribers may find Knowledge Index using command "GO KI". About 100 databases are available by this route, including ABI/INFORM, PAIS International, Books in Print, and Academic Index, to name just a few.

ACCESS: Compuserve.

PAIS International

PAIS is a bibliographic index to the public policy literature of business, economics, finance, law, international relations, government, political science, and other social sciences. It provides references in English to material published worldwide in any of six languages, English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish. PAIS provides comprehensive coverage of all issues of public policy, in-

cluding employment and labor, taxation, multinational corporations, banking, health, international relations, and specific industries.

ACCESS: Dialog, Compuserve (Knowledge Index).

LaborLaw

LaborLaw I provides summaries of decisions, as well as references to the source of the text of the decisions, on matters relating to labor relations, fair employment, wages and hours, and occupational safety and health. Material in this file comes from the Labor Relations Reporter, published by the Bureau of National Affairs, Inc.

ACCESS: Dialog.

Labor Law II

Also from the Labor Relations Reporter, LaborLaw II indexes and abstracts U.S. federal, state, and administrative agency decisions pertaining to labor relations. Each record contains all information related to one court case or administra-

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tive decision. Every record includes the following: case name, BNA case number, tribunal, date of decision, and BNA citation. It may also contain tribunal code, parallel citations, case history, docket number, decision maker (judge, arbitrator, or agency decision maker), BNA decision number, circuit for each federal circuit court, and state laws applied.

ACCESS: Dialog.

Lexis/Nexis: Favorite Files

Lexis/Nexis provides complete access to court cases and many other kinds of legal information. Labor researchers often use LABOR Library of Federal labor cases. The decisions of the National Labor Relations Board are also available, as well as the NLRB General Counsel Advice Memoranda. The Bureau of National Affairs' *Daily Labor Report* is a popular Lexis file at the Institute of Industrial Relations Library because it enables searchers to scan quickly for new developments.

ACCESS: Mead Data Central has law school and academic programs for the use of Lexis/Nexis, but these programs are strictly limited in eligibility. Moreover, all files are full-text files, which puts pressure on the searcher to know how to use the system wisely. A consultation with experienced Lexis/Nexis searchers is a necessary step. Mead Data Central has a special pricing structure for AFL-CIO-affiliated locals.

people just do not want to do this work. Fortunately, there is plenty of help available for hire. Information brokers will search any databases necessary to help you find what you need to know. Clients can expect to pay for research time, connect time, printing or "document delivery" (i.e., the cost of obtaining a paper copy, sometimes handled by a third party), and rush fees. Most brokers will provide a firm quote and stay on budget; unless rush fees apply, it is possible to conduct helpful research at the \$50 to \$75 budget level.

Many public libraries will have at least one directory of information brokers in their collection. Here are a few suggestions for quick reference. These firms are members of the San Francisco Bay Region Chapter of the Special Libraries Association. (NOTE: This listing is not meant to be a review or rating of services by these vendors.)

Augbergine Information Services

Augbergine Information Services is a Berkeley-based broker. Owner Reva Basch has published widely on the world of database searching. Her number is (510) 527-9064.

The Data Center

The Data Center is a non-profit research company that performs research on public-interest issues. The library at the Data Center offers a Pro

Community-based researchers must be smart consumers of these services and take pains to look for low cost—or zero cost—options.

Washington Alert

Congressional Quarterly Magazine has created Washington Alert as a "hot news" database covering the Federal Government. It is updated daily, and its many offerings include the text of U.S. statutes and regulations, The Congressional Record, biographies and voting records of members of Congress, various Capitol Hill news publications and not least, a "gateway" to full text of the Washington Post.

ACCESS: Washington Alert is loaded on MELVYL for use by UC library researchers. While there is no charge for on-site use of Washington Alert in the library, access could be limited by heavy demand.

Need Help? Here's Who to Call

Despite increased access to these databases, and the rapid emergence of zero-cost options, some

Bono Fund to help offset online research costs for community groups. Fees still apply, but the Pro Bono Program makes online research much more affordable. The Data Center also maintains an in-house databases of plant closures information, which is culled from press releases and other sources. For further information, call Andy Kivel at the Data Center, (510) 835-4692.

Information Express

Palo Alto-based Information Express is a full service research and document delivery service with a wide range of clients. Their telephone number is (415) 494-8787.

The Information Store

Located in the San Francisco Financial District, the Information Store has many corporate clients

and offers complete service. It is one of the largest brokers in the Bay Area. Their telephone number is (415) 433-5500.

Conclusions

The world of database research is much more familiar to the average citizen today than it was just a few years ago. Yet despite growing familiarity with online resources, rapid changes in technology

and access require ongoing attention. Community-based researchers must be smart consumers of these services and take pains to look for low cost—or zero cost—options. As the National Information Infrastructure becomes a fact of life, it will be increasingly important to keep track of new resources. Labor researchers should watch the press for developments and forge close ties with librarians in their international offices, at local colleges and universities, and at public libraries.

INTERNSHIP PROGRAM REPORT

Program Description

The Labor Center is pleased to report that 26 juniors and seniors interned with local labor unions this Fall. Students worked 8 hours a week for Bay Area Locals and had to write a 20 page paper for the CAL course taught through the Economics Department. Unions received help on a variety of projects including organizing, industry economic analysis, historical research, and community outreach. Student paper topics include the following:



Student Interns: Members of UC Berkeley's Economics 153 course

Targeting California Gaming to Restore Labor Activism and Reinforce Labor Rights - Chris Lee (HERE)

A Market Analysis of the Growing Nursing Home Industry - Sylvia Chan, Sam Ko (SEIU Local 250)

Learning from the Past: New Organizing Strategies for Iron Workers - Anthony Navarro (District Council of Iron Workers)

CFC Phaseout and Other Successful Environmental Laws: Lessons in Corporate Accountability for the Microelectronics Industry - Yael Falicov (Asian Immigrant Workers Alliance- AIWA)

Latina Immigrants as Union Activists - Cindy Weisner (HERE Local 28/50)

Labor Union Response to Health Care Reform in the 1990's - Jason Darlington (AGSE-UAW)

Racism, Inter-ethnic Antagonism and Labor Organization: San Francisco and the Economic Depression of the 1870s - Kim Mie Woo (CFT)

New Strategies for Unions in the Hotel Industry - Yi-Shenn Lim (HERE- Local 2)

Health Care Restructuring - Welfare Gain or Loss? - Tiffany Darling (SEIU Local 250)

Work and Family Benefits - the Corporate and the Union Approach - Tammy Ip (Labor Project for Working Families)

Redesigning Government Agencies and Its Effect on Public Sector Unions: A Case Study of CALTRANS and CSEA - Winston Cheng (CSEA-Local 1000-SEIU)

Because of the interest and enthusiasm that I displayed during the semester, the head of the local decided to take me on next semester as a paid intern with the possibility of a full time job when I graduate!

Dan Garcia, Student Intern

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ment. Political Focus: Unions have not taken a narrow economic approach, but instead have effectively linked political struggles with economic conditions. There has been a clear understanding that the economic conditions in the country are profoundly shaped by government action, and COSATU in particular has played a critical role in the political struggle against apartheid.

Community Ties

Workers have not taken a narrow workplace perspective in organizing for their demands. There has been a strong move towards linking workers demands with community struggles. Through working in civic associations and organizing boycotts and mass demonstrations, workers have been able to mobilize broad sectors of the community in support of workers rights. This combination of political astuteness and broad perspective—social movement unionism—has allowed the union movement to take advantage of workers strategic role in the economy and to have such a major impact in the country.

Four Years of Transition, 1990-1994

When the ban on the African National Congress was removed, and Nelson Mandela was released from prison in February 1990, trade unions had to begin making a strategic shift in the focus of their work. Prior to 1990, unions were working under conditions of intense repression, with trade union leaders detained and tortured on a regular basis. Starting in 1990, the situation began to change rapidly, and the unions have had to respond to the changing conditions. COSATU and its affiliated trade unions continued to play a major role in the political struggle, lending their considerable weight to the African National Congress in the negotiation process, and organizing mass demonstrations and stay-aways when needed to keep the process moving forward. When negotiations broke down in June

1992, it was COSATU that was able to organize the mass stay-aways in August that essentially shut the economy down nation-wide. This eventually forced the government to return to the negotiating table. While continuing to support the political struggle, COSATU also began addressing the need for a thorough restructuring of the economy. They recognized that a piece-meal approach, focusing just on improving wages and working conditions, would not be adequate to address workers needs, but that the entire economic structure, built on a highly centralized and unequal control of economic resources, needed to be addressed. COSATU was able to force the government to end unilateral restructuring, and enter into negotiations aimed at developing new economic policy for the entire country. They initiated the National Economic Forum, which brought business, labor and the government together, and have participated in negotiating forums ranging from drought relief to electrification. All of this has been aimed at translating their strength of organization on the ground into specific policy aimed at restructuring the economy of the country.

In addition to the political and economic interventions, COSATU and its affiliated unions have also had to undertake initiatives to strengthen their internal organizational structures. While moving from a climate of intense repression, in which they had to operate in an underground and covert manner, the trade unions were faced with the task of consolidating their mass support in specific organizational and administrative structures. This was attempted through strengthening their communication and decision making structures, improving their information systems and technology, and trying to increase their financial self-sufficiency. The issue of financial self-sufficiency is especially important, since the majority of COSATU's funding since its founding in 1985 has come from foreign sources, and without internal sources of funding, the unions face potential limits on their independence and militancy.

While there have been major achievements in each of these areas, numerous difficulties have also surfaced during this time. One of the major prob-

DID YOU KNOW?

During the 1980s, the average annual income of the bottom one percent of the population fell by \$400. The average annual income of the top one percent of the population rose by \$216,185.

lems that has emerged is an increasing tension between the membership and leadership. The leadership of COSATU has been involved in extensive negotiations, through the various negotiating forums. Meanwhile, the membership has seen little improvement in their wages or working conditions, and the number of members actually remained stagnant or declined. As the transition dragged, shop stewards and union members became increasingly

this issue by creating an electoral pact with the ANC. COSATU began to develop a general vision for the kinds of transformation it wanted to see in South Africa, including all aspects of South African society, such as health, education, and other issues that workers felt were important. The idea was that the ANC had to sign onto the electoral pact, in return for which COSATU would put its considerable weight behind the ANC's electoral campaign.

The argument is also made that South Africa now has to compete internationally, that the organized trade union movement is a hindrance and that high wages drive away international investment.

frustrated and pushed for more focus on servicing members and helping to build the union structures from the ground up.

A second major issue that emerged was the relationship between COSATU and a future democratic government. COSATU has been in a strategic alliance with the African National Congress (ANC) since its unbanning. This has meant close collaboration and coordination, and in practice, most COSATU members are members of the ANC, and there is a considerable cross-over of leadership. The question, however, was whether to continue that kind of relationship once the ANC became part of a new government. Those arguing in favor of maintaining the strategic alliance argued that having such close ties with the majority party in government would provide important benefits for the union movement and benefits for workers. Those that argued against maintaining the alliance argued that political parties and trade unions have very different interests. They argued that, once it formed the new government, the ANC would be subjected to a whole range of pressures from various other interests, and that it was crucial for the trade unions to remain independent and to articulate the needs of workers, independent of what government policy should be.

At the heart of this debate is the relationship between the labor movement and political parties and, thus, the relationship between economic and political demands. In particular, trade unions wanted to ensure they could maintain a strong, militant and politicized labor movement that wouldn't be coopted by the new leadership. COSATU tried to address

In practice, the ANC took the process that COSATU initiated and turned it into its own Reconstruction and Development Programme, which now serves as the basic guideline to socio-economic reconstruction of the country. The process is no longer a COSATU controlled effort, but most of COSATU's views were essentially incorporated in the document.

Post-Election

The elections have brought a number of positive changes for the conditions of workers in South Africa. The first and foremost is that Jay Naidoo, the former General-Secretary of COSATU, has been made Minister in charge of implementing the Reconstruction and Development Programme. This means that the primary program for the social and economic upliftment of the country is in the hands of the premier trade union leader in the country. Another 60 trade unionists have been elected into key positions in national and regional parliaments. New economic policies and labor laws are being implemented, and the labor movement now has significant allies in government. However, COSATU and the trade union movement in general face a number of critical challenges and problems.

Internally, one of the most immediate problems has been a vacuum in leadership. COSATU chose 20 key union leaders to stand for elections on the ANC ticket, and all 20 were elected into the national parliament. However, there was little strategic planning that went into that choice. People were chosen on the basis of their history with the trade

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unions and thus their popularity and experience, but little thought was put into the kind of leadership the unions would need after the elections. Furthermore, COSATU didn't think strategically about the regional elections either, in which an additional 40 trade unionists were elected. This has created a leadership vacuum at all levels of the union movement at a time when the unions need strong leadership the most.

A more serious long-term problem has to do with the high levels of unemployment in the country. Official figures generally put unemployment between 30-50% in the country as a whole (accurate statistics are difficult), but in many areas of the country, that number is significantly higher. This means that workers are under intense pressure to accept lower wages. This pressure primarily comes from employers, who argue that lower wages mean more jobs. The argument is also made that South Africa now has to compete internationally, that the organized trade union movement is a hindrance and that high wages drive away international investment. Wage levels in South Africa are, in general, 3-4 times higher than in Indonesia or Malaysia, and the argu-

ment goes that if South Africa is going to compete on the international market, it has to accept lower wages, otherwise it won't attract foreign investment.

There are big flaws in this argument, however, which COSATU is trying to highlight. It's true that South African wages are higher than many other third world countries. But South African wages are also only one third the level of wages in South Korea or Taiwan, both of which are booming economically. Furthermore, as they point out, competitiveness and economic prosperity don't come only, or even primarily, from low wages. For instance, between 1980 and 1993, Singapore and South Korea, which have had vibrant economies, saw real wages rise 101% and 231% respectively. South Africa has a well-developed infrastructure, a good telecommunication system, and a diverse and vibrant economy. It has a massive surplus of electricity generating capacity, and great potential to be more than just a depository for cheap third world labor.

The issue is whether South Africa will try to compete in the international market on the high road or the low road. The low road would be to compete on the basis of low wages for unskilled export assembly jobs. The alternative is to develop a high road strategy. This would include primarily a major investment in the educational and skill compo-

ORGANIZING VICTORY UPDATE

About 75 workers waited nervously outside the factory gates at ten o'clock at night on August 18th as 2,200 paper ballots marked for or against union representation were being tallied inside. This was the third election since 1989 for the employees of Tultex Corporation in Martinsville, Virginia, who make sweatshirts and sweatpants.

Finally, about 40 workers who had been observing the count came running out of the plant and down the hill toward the gate, shouting and waving their arms in victory, and the crowd at the gate erupted in celebration.

For about fifteen minutes, people hugged, cheered, and cried as the realization of the scope of victory became clear. Not only had the union won the election, the results had been a landslide. 1,321 workers had voted yes, while only 710 had voted no. "This is a victory of hope over fear," said Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union Regional Director Bruce Raynor, referring to the company's campaign against the union.

The primary issue in the 1994 campaign was that the company had cut workers' pay by 20-30%. Management stressed plant closings, layoffs, and strikes throughout the 2 month campaign. Key to the union victory was the active role played by the organizing committee -- who kept Tultex on the defensive by pushing their message in the plant and local media.

Union activists now turn to the task of choosing a bargaining committee from among the workers and preparing their contract proposals. Workers have not forgotten the elation of election night. Describing how he felt as he celebrated at the plant gate that night, employee Chris Lampkins said, "I felt like I was free."

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nent of its workforce, and a major push for restructuring industry. COSATU is pushing for ways to make South African industry more flexible, and re-orienting industry away from luxury consumer items, developing more of an internal market and servicing the southern Africa region. They are also trying to identify niche-markets where South Africa has a comparative advantage on the international market.

COSATU is also trying to build stronger ties with other international trade union movements. In particular, they have built strong ties with the Workers Party in Brazil, and are initiating ties with progressive unions through-out the Pacific Rim and other African countries. Their hope is that through this international response, they will be able to weaken corporations' ability to force countries to simply compete over cheap wages.

Such a strategy might help deal with some of the problems for formal sector workers. With 50% unemployment, however, and most of the population barely surviving to some extent off the informal economy, more drastic strategies are needed. Large-scale public works programs are being pursued, which are expected to provide 2 million jobs over the next five years. A boom in the housing and construction industry should provide a host of other new jobs. Efforts to provide credit, business training and other assistance to microenterprises and small black-owned businesses is essential. COSATU is currently pushing policies related to all these questions, trying to defend the interests of the working class as a whole, rather than simply protecting narrower interests of their own members.

Lessons for the U.S. Labor Movement

What are the lessons from South Africa for labor struggles in the U.S.? In the past, the strength of the trade union movement in South Africa came from its strong democratic structure. A culture of worker control and strong democratic structures have ensured that workers have been effectively represented by their leadership, and that union officials have remained by and large accountable to their membership.

In the current period, the situation becomes more complex. Like the U.S., South Africa is greatly impacted by the increasing globalization of the economy. The pressure to compete in international markets and the increasing mobility of capital threaten wages and jobs in both parts of the world. COSATU is working to combat these forces through remaining committed to that bottoms-up approach, building strategic ties with the new democratic government, and focusing on broad economic policy that goes beyond work-place organizing.

This suggests a real need for more bottoms-up, worker control in the U.S. labor movement. It suggests a more dynamic and activist understanding of the relationship between political structures and organizing in the workplace. It suggests the need for a more proactive approach to economic policy, that represents the needs of more marginalized workers in our society. And it suggests the need for more international cooperation, to avoid the kind of protectionist policies that result in workers around the world simply competing with each other for low wages, while the multi-national corporations operate relatively unhindered.

LABOR PROJECT FOR WORKING FAMILIES

The Labor Project for Working Families was founded in 1992 by a labor coalition which included the Central Labor Councils of the AFL-CIO in the counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco and San Mateo in California, and the local chapter of the Coalition of Labor Union Women. The Labor Project works with local unions to develop family policies at the workplace through collective bargaining. Work and family policies include family leave, flexible hours (part time, job share, flex time, telecommuting), child care and elder care benefits, sick time for families and domestic partner benefits.

The Project provides consultation and technical assistance to unions. It also produces a quarterly labor/work and family newsletter and has developed an extensive database of collective bargaining language from a range of industries.

For more information, newsletter subscription or database information, contact the Labor Project for Working Families, I.I.R., 2521 Channing Way, Berkeley, CA 94720. (510) 643-6814.

See the calendar for the Project's "Balancing Work and Family: A Union Approach" workshop series.

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C A L E N D A R

December 10, 1994 - GATEWAYS TO THE SUPERHIGHWAY

A workshop for trade unionists on information resources available through the Internet. For more information, call 510-642-0323 or fill out and mail the update card next to this calendar.

January 6, 1995 - SUBMISSION DEADLINE FOR NEXT LCR

Are you interested in submitting an article for possible publication in a forthcoming *Reporter*? Contact John Sladkus at 510-643-6815 or FAX the article to 510-642-6432.

January 11, 1995 - BARGAINING FOR CHILD CARE*

Hear about labor's role in developing a night and day care center with flexible hours, a fund negotiated by the union to pay for child care for hotel workers, and more!

February 15, 1995 OR March 1, 1995 - FAMILY & MEDICAL LEAVE ACT, ONE YEAR LATER* This workshop includes a review of the law, as well as a discussion of the benefits, problems, and gaps in the law.

April 12, 1995 - FLEXIBILITY AT THE UNION WORKPLACE*

Hear about the problems, pitfalls, and opportunities for labor in negotiating flexibility.

*Part of the Labor Project for Working Families "Balancing Work and Families: A Union Approach" series. Call 510-643-6814 for more information.

BAY AREA LABOR STUDIES SEMINARS

Lynn Williams, former President of the United Steelworkers Union will give a seminar in late January/early February. Exact date TBD.