Workers’ Rights Curriculum Expanded and Soon Available in Spanish

The Workers’ Rights curriculum is moving into a new and exciting phase. As reported earlier in this newsletter, the curriculum was developed by the Labor Extension Program in response to requests by organizers and educators working with immigrant workers, students, and others new to or rejoining the workforce, e.g. welfare recipients entering the workforce. We are working to improve and expand this curriculum to better meet the needs of these constituencies, as well as to respond to new constituencies, such as temporary and contingent workers. Many of the community organizers and adult educators who participated in the “Training of Trainers” we provided in the spring have tried out sections of the curriculum. Based on their feedback and requests of other groups, we are adding two new modules, as well as continuing to modify and improve the original sections. One new module will address the particular issues of contingent and temporary workers. The other new module will be specific to the needs of immigrant workers, both undocumented and documented. These new modules will be available late fall and will be added to the original nine modules, which are: Introduction To Basic Workers Protections; Beginning Employment: Your Pay and Your Paychecks; Rights of Workers Under Age 18; Overtime (we hope labor can successfully fight back the proposed changes and reduction of our overtime rights); Protection from Discrimination; Health and Safety; Family and Medical Leave Act; Unemployment Insurance; Unions and the Right to Organize.

All nine modules of the curriculum, including facilitators’ outlines and all participant handouts, are available on our web site at: http://cpcs.umb.edu/lep/revgs.html. We encourage all labor activists and educators to visit our web site, download and help pilot this curriculum. Feedback forms are available on the web site as well. And we invite all readers of this newsletter to visit the web site and check it out.

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Solidarity School

Location: UMass Lowell, Rm. 104, park in Lot 1
Cost: $60 for 3 days, or $25 per day
For more information call: (508) 999-8781

For the fifth year, the UMass Labor Extension Program and UMass Lowell Labor Education Program present the Worksite Leadership Academy, basic steward’s training and a Stewards College where members take four Saturday classes to graduate. The Solidarity School combines learning and action with class sessions in English and Spanish facilitated by and for Spanish speaking women. For more information, call Tim Dean at 1-800-882-1487, ext. 125.

Health and Safety Conference

Saturday, November 8, 2003, morning and early afternoon
Location: UMass Lowell, Rm. 104, park in Lot 1
Cost: Free
For more information call (508) 999-8781

The Labor Resource Center at UMass Boston is going through some major changes this fall. Director Pat Reeve and Research Coordinator Mary Jo Connelly will both be leaving us in mid October. We will be offering this conference to strengthen activists’ skills and to learn about building your union’s health and safety program. We will also offer sessions on workers’ compensation, indoor air quality, and health and safety on the web.

The Resource Corner

Workers Rights Info Available in Other Languages

It is not easy to find materials on workers’ rights in other languages. But the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice has made a big step in the right direction. They have published a series of useful and attractive workers rights “inserts” that can be downloaded and printed from their web site at www.nicwj.org/papers/materials/Wisues.html. These simple, 1-sided, half-page (8.5” by 5.5”) inserts are made so that they can be inserted into a program book or bulletin. Each insert deals with a particular aspect of federal law, and all are available in nine languages: English, Spanish, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Hmong, Polish, Russian, Korean and Vietnamese. The issues treated in the inserts are: minimum wage and overtime; occupational safety & health, discrimination; teenage workers, and immigration-related discrimination.

In addition to these inserts, the NICWJ makes available a number of other useful materials, including a 2-page insert, in English and Spanish, on the infamous Hoffman Plastics number of other useful materials, including a 2-page insert, in English and Spanish, on the infamous Hoffman Plastics "job case study" which severely impacted immigrants’ ability to unionize; and a two page flyer (in English) “What Faith Groups Say About the Right to Organize”.

UMASS AMHERST

Spring and summer work at UMass Amherst focused on moving into our new building and coordinating the UALE Northeast Regional Summer School for Union Women, held at the Meany Center/National Labor College in Silver Spring, MD. The school brought together 140 union women from all over the Northeast, plus Guyana, Bermuda and Nigeria, for a week of workshops, networking and skill building. Following summer school, attention turned to packing up and moving to our beautiful new building, Gordon Hall, designed and union-built for PFEI, the Political Economy Research Institute. We also taught workshops on Public Speaking and Leadership Skills for WELD, Conflict Resolution for Summer School, and workshops on framing labor issues for our members and the media at Gompers-Murray-Meany. The dramatic highlight of the session was channeling the spirit of Frances Perkins, the first US Secretary of Labor, on behalf of Painters DC 35 at a rally at Mt. Holyoke College.

UMASS BOSTON

The Labor Resource Center at UMass Boston is going through some major changes this fall. Director Pat Reeve and Research Coordinator Mary Jo Connelly will both be leaving us in mid October. They will both be sorely missed, and we wish all them the best in their new endeavors. Pat and Mary Jo are leaving at a time of major financial cutbacks at the University, but they are working with Center supporters to ensure that the vacated positions are refilled. While we are very sad to be losing two wonderful colleagues, the good news is that neither the Labor Studies course offerings this semester nor the Labor Extension Program will be affected by their departure. The Center will be undertaking a major evaluation and strategic planning process in the next few months to figure out how best to move forward in these new circumstances and ensure that labor’s issues continue to be on the front burner at the University.

UMASS LOWELL

UMass Lowell is working with the Merrimack Valley Central Labor Council to help build the new council: encouraging affiliated unions to send delegates, recruiting new union affiliates, mobilizing delegates to support labor and community struggles. We’re facilitating a Leadership Retreat to help develop a strong leadership team. With the North South Labor Economic Development committee, we are examining tax break agreements received by North Shore companies and assessing their accountability in support of the AFL-CIO. We hope to join NECLC in Miami for the FTAA activities. We are sponsoring an organization of the Merrimack Valley Workers Center, which is surveying other worker centers to apply best practices to the MVW Center. We are working with the AFL-CIO Diversity Committee to prepare a presentation at the AFL-CIO convention of results of a survey on the demographics of Massachusetts unions. We are exploring doing an educational event on the FTAA in collaboration with other departments at the University.