

EVALUATION OF BAY AREA/L.A. WOMEN'S CONFERENCE
February 26, 1977

by Bay Area Women's
Caucus Steering
Committee

1. STRUCTURE, POLITICAL CONCEPTION, MAJOR THEMES

Structure

Agenda. See attached.

Attendance. Most of the women who attended the conference were white; however, 3 asians, 1 black, and 1 chicana attended. Approximately 45-50 women participated in the event. There was a wide range in age. Workers from many industries were represented: 3 postal workers, 3 garment workers, 1 cannery worker (IBT), 3 UPS drivers, 6-7 other Teamsters, 3 Teamster wives, 5-6 SEIU workers, 3-4 teachers, 1 telephone worker, 3-4 AFSCME workers, and others from OCAW and machinists. In addition, about 3-4 students, 2-3 ~~xxxxxxx~~ social workers, and a number of unorganized women interested in organizing their workplaces attended.

Political Conception

1. Rebuild the I.S. women's perihpery
2. Use women issues to focus and draw together different areas of our work (i.e., *community and industrial*).
3. Politically address issues in the women's movement and also as related to organizing in the workplace
4. Begin to work ^a way forward for the women's movement and fighting for women's issues on the job.

Major Themes

Karen G.'s opening talk addressed general questions of the women's movement, as well as an analysis of the family, putting it in the framework of our economic analysis. She also spoke on the I.S. perspective on independent organizing of women, Both at the workplace and inside the revolutionary party. Excellent and animated political discussion followed.

The panel disucssion titled, "Women Fighting Back," was impressive. Panel participants included Rita Drapkin, UPSurge East, who spoke on the East Coast strike and the Teamster Wives Group in Pittsburgh; Delfina Lozoya, from Cannery Workers Committee, who spoke about their recent fight for seniority rights for part-time workers; Evie Thomas, from the Teamster Women's Caucus, who spoke on her recent firing from UPS for political activities; Jane Watanabe, from the Snow Lion Workers Committee, who spoke about the recent organizing drive at Snow Lion and the development of the workers committee; and Kay Eisenhower, from Clerks County SEIU, who spoke on their recent strike. The discussion that followed was very good, with women from the floor sharing experiences of fighting back at their workplaces. Provocative questions such as dealing with red-baiting, bringing socialist politics into trade union work, and the limitations of reform struggles were asked and dealt with by the group.

2. ACTIVITIES AND RECRUITMENT

We hoped that we would get more ideas for future activities from the workshops, but structural problems prevented us from reaching concrete specifics. In particular, we had hoped to draw some ideas from the workshop on women's demands in contracts and on the job. Mary from L.A. gave a good presentation on the history of maternity leave and abortion, but again due to agenda problems, only 15 minutes was left for discussion before dinner break. However, prospects look good and we plan to do some follow up on women who expressed interest in doing work on these issues.

In the immediate future, we hope to recruit a teacher and a UPS worker. As a result of the conference, our periphery has been broadened and our reputation has been expanded. For example, Kay Eisenhower, from SEIU, has expressed a desire to re-establish political ties with the I.S. In general, contacts who attended the conference were very impressed.

3. ANALYSIS

Politically the conference was a tremendous success. However, the conference had some structural problems. The program was scheduled to start at noon and run to 5 p.m. when a dinner break was scheduled. No other breaks were planned. As a result, ^{except for before the} people did not get an opportunity to talk informally ~~with~~ and by the time dinner arrived, we had lost almost half of our participants. We feel that we should have started earlier, at 10 a.m., and scheduled a lunch break. We also started late and did not begin the workshops until 4:30 which resulted in short workshops and fewer participants.

It was great to have the women from L.A. attend. Their presence added needed political weight to the conference.

We knew from the beginning that it was a problem that we had no real concrete proposals as a follow-up for the conference. We had a sign-up list for people interested in working with us on future projects.

Although the workshops were not able to get to dealing with future projects, the quality and quantity of response was so great that we are optimistic about possibilities for future work. Possible projects we are considering:

- a. Working in the Coalition to Fight the Bakke Decision
- b. Doing follow-up conference continuation workshops
- c. Working with fractions on bringing women's issues, i.e. maternity leave and childcare, into our work
- d. Having Karen's talk for men as well as women
- e. Doing follow-up communication with women attending conference about possibly initiating some kind of future activity

EVALUATION p. 3

One other positive aspect of the conference was the organizing process. A steering committee of 3 women was formed, which served as the exec of the women's caucus. The committee organized details, split up the branch and tasks, communicated to L.A., Portland, Seattle, and the women's commission, and met and had political discussion with all speakers in preparation for their talks. Therefore little actual organizing needed to be done by the women's caucus. Instead the steering committee organized political discussion of the speeches and our general politics to prepare ourselves for the conference.