

14 Charles Lane
New York, New York 10014
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TO ALL ORGANIZERS AND NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dear Comrades,

Attached are condensed reports from six areas about CLUW. The report from Detroit is the summary of a report given to the Detroit branch. The six together give an idea of the strengths and weaknesses of CLUW at this point as well as the opportunities for building it. In addition, The Militant dated June 7 reports on some of the activities in other areas.

The next month or so will be significant for CLUW activists. City-wide meetings or conferences are scheduled in at least eleven cities. On the whole, the meetings have been called to draw in new women and to discuss plans and perspectives for local CLUW chapters. The meetings are being held in: Denver - June 8; Minneapolis - June 6; St. Louis - June 3; Chicago - June 8; Houston - June 3; Boston - June 29; San Francisco - June 1; Portland - June 15; D.C. - May 30; Los Angeles - end of June; New York - June 17.

We will want to cover these meetings for The Militant. Each area should make sure that someone is assigned to write a story and get it in promptly.

You will notice in the report from Detroit that the national office of CLUW expects to have some basic literature ready and distributed around the first of June. This should be a help in organizing local chapters.

You will also notice some references to the Maoists. They appear to be playing a larger role nationally than we were aware of before. It would be helpful if areas that have not sent in reports will do so, and will include information about any of our opponents in CLUW.

Please share these reports with comrades active in CLUW work.

Comradely,



Linda Jenness
Women's Liberation Director

CLUW Report - Washington, D.C. - May 26

I. CLUW Activities and Structure

- A. There are three functioning committees in CLUW:
1. Recruitment -- reaching out to women in local unions not yet involved in CLUW, organizing a speakers bureau, and preparing a brochure on CLUW.
 2. Communications -- publicizing the CLUW meetings and publishing a newsletter.
 3. Program -- planning the programs for CLUW meetings.
 - a. We recently had a meeting on Working Women and Sex Discrimination. Approximately 85 women turned out for this, which shows the potential for this type of educational activity.
 - b. This will be followed by a meeting which will hear reports on the status of women in the unions to which CLUW members belong.
 - c. The June meeting will be on the topic "Organizing Unorganized Women".
 - d. A Sat. workshop session on Sex Discrimination will be taking place in July, with the purpose of organizing against sex discrimination.
 - e. A fund-raising social is being organized for late June.
- B. There are two or three coordinators for each committee and these seven people plus the three convenors make up the steering committee, which serves as a coordinating body for all CLUW activities.
- C. CLUW meetings are held once a month (this was voted on by a general CLUW meeting) and have attracted up to 80 women.
1. About 10% of the meetings have been Black women.
 2. The committees meet once or twice between general CLUW meetings
 3. The steering committee meets as often as necessary.
 4. 30-40 women are active on one of the committees and/or the steering committee.
- D. The steering committee will be having a discussion soon on the question of having CLUW elections, (possibly interim elections if national CLUW is not yet ready to begin chartering locals).

II. Tendencies in D.C. CLUW

We are the only political tendency in CLUW that we know of for sure. We have some hints that a couple women might be in the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee.

A number of women on the steering committee have been involved in the radical and women's movements for some time, but aren't in any organized political tendency.

III. Recruitment

Since there aren't so many automatic opportunities to talk to CLUW women about our politics, we'll have to be very conscious about seeking out the women most likely to be interested in our ideas and our movement. The CLUW fraction here made a list of CLUW women that we want to contact regularly for forums, campaign activities. And we plan to make a point of getting the names of interested women when selling the MILITANT outside CLUW meetings.

Report from Houston - May 20

We have started CLUW work from rock-bottom here and it is a great, but potentially rewarding, challenge. CLUW has initiated great debate in my local (OCAW) for three consecutive meetings now, but headway has been made. Although I have gotten some cooperation from the secretary-treasurer of my local, who is also President of the County Labor Council, I surmise he is most uncomfortable on the totally rank-and-file nature of CLUW here. There are no women officials in the area that we can find.

He is caught in the middle, however, as are the others, by the very real pressures developing on all sides. We did emerge with finances, use of union hall for an initial CLUW meeting and agreement to do a mailing to the women members of the local.

We are beginning to gather round some CLUW potentials. Our first meeting is set for June 3 and we have a number of moves, modest ones, including a push for Labor Council appearance, in motion. Our literature is now at the union printers.

We have not heard much from the rest of Texas, although Austin was in the process of setting up a CLUW meeting.

We have a CLUW literature table at the NOW convention and hope to meet the union women in attendance, especially any from the Texas area.

Report Given to the Detroit Branch

The Coalition of Labor Union Women exists. The test for us now is to build it. In determining how to help it grow, several factors must be taken into account.

1. An organization such as CLUW has the potential for being one of the elements in transforming the union movement into a fighting class struggle instrument. This is a fact which both we and the union bureaucracy recognize. The union bureaucracy is obviously nervous about that potential and this is reflected in their approach to organizing CLUW.

2. Unlike almost all of our opponents--who see CLUW as simply another forum for them to "expose the bureaucrats"--we understand that the current leadership of the unions is crucial to the growth of CLUW. We want to help keep them involved, get to know them and work with them.

3. The strength of CLUW lies in its being organized within the existing trade union movement. We do not want to get CLUW cut off and isolated from the union movement.

4. There are literally thousands of women who are potential CLUW activists that can only be reached through their unions. We cannot write off these women by trying to circumvent the union structure. We have to understand that the overwhelming majority of union members do not share our analysis of the treacherous role of the union bureaucracy. To demand that level of consciousness from union women as a precondition to becoming involved in CLUW would be fatal. Not only would it automatically isolate CLUW from the unions, but it would also make CLUW unintelligible and threatening to the very rank-and-file women we want to involve in CLUW. CLUW gives us a chance to work shoulder-to-shoulder with hundreds of women unionists we have never had access to before. This is a very important opportunity.

These factors determine our activity. We want to build and broaden something that the bureaucrats are very nervous about. We must be patient and not try to artificially barge ahead. Our first job is to reach out and bring more women in, gain authority and legitimacy for CLUW, and thereby lay the basis for future action.

Here in Detroit there is a layer of militant women who went to Chicago who are very enthused and want to do things. These women are not aware of the bigger problem of the leadership holding back and see no reason not to move out and do something, even though they are not sure what to do. Our job with regard to these women will be to patiently explain in informal discussion--to whatever extent possible--our analysis of the situation and the importance of patient building work and going through the formalities required for getting the Detroit CLUW chapter recognized.

One thing these women can do is get involved in women's committees in their unions, or establishing them where they do not exist. For instance, one very enthusiastic young woman in the American Postal Workers Union returned from Chicago with contacts and full of ideas. She was impatient about the slowness of organizing CLUW. I encouraged her not to get hung up waiting for CLUW but to start organizing in her local. Last Sunday she called a meeting of women in the postal service to discuss how to deal with discrimination against women in the post office. They are considering a class action suit against discriminatory policies.

Even if some women do drift away in this formative period, we should make sure to contact them in the future for CLUW activities.

Work in the immediate period is proceeding along the following lines:

1) Publicity to and through the unions

a) articles in union papers. So far there have been articles in the Detroit Metropolitan AFL-CIO News, the Michigan State AFL-CIO News, the Michigan Teacher, Wayne County Community

College Federation News, AFSCME 188 Newsletter. I'm sure there were reports in the UAW papers.

b) resolutions of support and endorsement. The Detroit Metropolitan AFL-CIO, the Wayne County Community College Federation of Teachers and the Michigan Federation of Teachers have all passed resolutions of endorsement.

c) get speakers before union meetings. The Metropolitan Detroit AFL-CIO says they will send out a letter to all their affiliated locals introducing CLUW and asking them to invite speakers. In addition, the editor of the Michigan state AFL-CIO paper is very sympathetic to CLUW and will give us a list of all the international AFL-CIO unions in the state and the contact person for setting up speaking engagements in local unions.

2) We want to begin organizing local CLUW chapters. There will be a large meeting held here in Detroit, probably around mid-July, to hear a report on the Chicago conference and draw in new women. This is the first step to start off the CLUW building campaign in Detroit.

3) We especially want to get a feel from the women involved what they would like to see CLUW do. We want to encourage them to think of realistic activities for CLUW to carry out: strike support and support to organizing drives (where there are no jurisdictional questions involved). CLUW could, for example, organize a picket line in front of the federal building in support of a class action suit against discrimination by women postal employees or something of that character.

The national office which will be here in Detroit will have a booklet with the proceedings from Chicago, the statement of purpose, and CLUW membership cards printed and distributed around the first of June.

Report from Los Angeles -- May 8

We got off to a bad start here after one of the state conveners, Cathy Seal from the U.A.W., attempted to go around the other two state conveners and force a city-wide meeting before they were ready for it. It turns out that Cathy Seal is a member of the October League.

We have spent the last week trying to patch things up. It now looks like we can go ahead with some of the meetings, just a little slower than originally projected. We are planning a large city-wide meeting towards the end of June.

I have changed my estimation of the number of independents who were in the California delegation to the national conference, and perhaps the convention as a whole. At least the October League had a sizeable intervention from several areas of the country, including here, Northern California, Atlanta and Chicago, that we weren't aware of. Apparently some of their people got elected as state conveners.

Needless to say, we don't want to find ourselves in some outlaw CLUW chapter here in L.A. with the October League and the New American Movement. At this point there is nothing to do but go along with the postponement here. We are suffering from the fact that there were no activities in L.A. prior to the Chicago conference so there is no authoritative body to go to.

At this point the women officials can kill CLUW if they want to, and we have to do everything we can not to make it necessary for them to kill it. I sense a real feeling of panic among some of them. They want CLUW very badly, and in their own way want to build it, but they are very worried about maintaining control of it and creating it in their own image.

Meanwhile, I've talked to a number of people at work who are interested in CLUW and anxiously awaiting the first meeting. My union (CWA) is going to enthusiastically support CLUW

Report from Boston - April 25

Following the national CLUW conference in Chicago a meeting was held to acquaint those women who knew of, but had not attended, the conference with what had happened. All who had attended were agreed that it was an important, historic occasion for women and for the labor movement. Further, all agreed that there was a lot of education and reach out work to be done. No particular issue predominated at this meeting but rather the need to build Boston CLUW, get our charter, involve more women and more unions. An expanded steering committee meeting was called for in order to involve leadership women from more unions in the area in the planning of CLUW's immediate future activities.

The next meeting was attended by 15 women from nine unions. Of the women present, 3 were Stalinists, 3 SWPers, and the rest independents. Organizing the unorganized was the main thrust of the discussion. A more specific issue discussed--which the Stalinists seem to be pushing--is child care.

Basically everyone can see the need for educational outreach for the time being. We will be publicizing CLUW with newspaper articles, press releases, and talk shows. We already have a one-hour program set up on a labor radio show in Worcester. Our immediate goal is putting together literature, a newsletter, and information for mailings to unions in order to get speaking appointments before general membership meetings (or executive boards), seeking funds, endorsement, resources, and more interested union women.

There was much sentiment to include non-union women in CLUW. The decision on that was postponed and until a decision is made we should see as primary getting union women involved, and non-union women could come as visitors but not vote.

In order to strengthen Boston CLUW we are regularizing and publicizing general meetings. The 1199 Union Hall is our meeting place every other Thursday.

We are currently building for a one-day conference on June 29 with speakers, workshops, and entertainment. Action proposals can be brought up at that time. There is an organizing drive going on at Harvard that CLUW may want to become involved in.

Report from Portland - May 14

CLUW held a forum at the YWCA on April 27. It was endorsed by the Washington County Labor Council. The media gave it excellent coverage.

Forty-four women attended to hear reports on the conference. A good discussion followed on the ERA. The Revolutionary Union women attacked the ERA and we didn't have to say a word, all kinds of women in unions got up and defended it. A briefer but good discussion also took place on the relationship between the women's liberation movement and CLUW.

Of the 44 women there, 23 of them were in unions (most of them not in any opponent tendency). At least 12 unions were represented. Individuals of note in attendance were: the regional coordinator of the Retail Clerks, the Oregon political campaign director of the AFL-CIO, a representative of the Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women, the head of the civil rights division of the Bureau of Labor, the head of the Waitress' Union, the financial secretary of the United Garment Workers, and the Vice-president of the Communications Workers of America local.

A Democratic party woman came to the meeting and asked for endorsement for her campaign. The chair (one of the Stalinists) explained to her why CLUW doesn't endorse candidates. Then the chair noticed Stacey Seigle and without any solicitation on our part asked Stacey to say a few words just to be fair.

A state convention or conference is planned for June 15th. The general concept of that meeting at this point is to start with a keynote nationally authoritative speaker, then break into workshops on fighting sexism on the job, the ERA, the legal rights of women, breaking into male dominated trade unions, etc., then reconvene into plenary sessions with reports and possible resolutions that might come from the workshops.

The June 15 meeting can provide a focus for carrying out an ambitious propaganda campaign--i.e. continuing good media work, organizing tours for CLUW to speak at union local meetings, get endorsements from unions, speaking to community groups, getting articles on CLUW into union papers.

The state AFL-CIO convention is the following week and we will want to get their endorsement. One of the main jobs here is to broaden CLUW out.