

JUSTICE SPEAKS

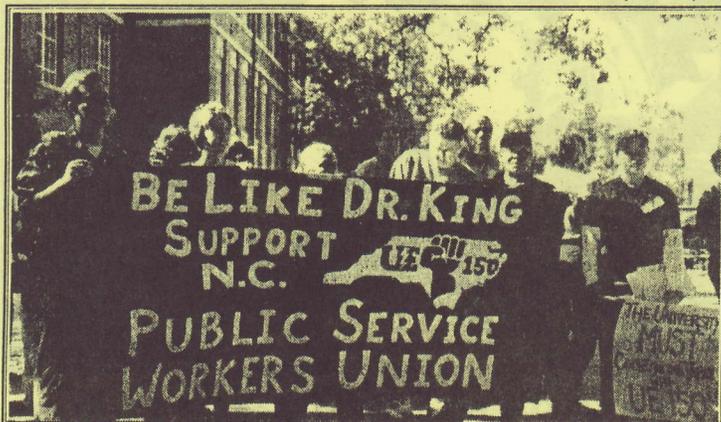
BLACK WORKERS FOR JUSTICE

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Photo by Yoni Chapman



UE 150 Protest Forces New Chancellor to Meet

Members of the UNC-Chapel Hill chapter of UE Local 150, the North Carolina Public Service Workers' Union, held a spirited and successful demonstration on October 19 demanding that the administration of UNC Chapel Hill restart regular negotiation sessions with workers in order to address workplace issues. The rally was held during the 'University Day' installation of UNC-Chapel Hill's new chancellor, James Moeser and was attended by more than a two dozen members of UE 150 and UE 150-A, the recently formed graduate employee and adjunct faculty union. Many student and faculty supporters also attended the rally. The demonstration, which lasted for the entire ceremony, was successful in forcing Chancellor Moeser to commit to meeting with workers.

At the beginning of this year, the UNC administration, without any explanation, backed out of these negotiations that housekeepers at UNC-Chapel Hill had fought for and won during the early and mid-1990's. After months of management ignoring letters and other efforts made by workers to schedule new meetings, members of UE 150 at UNC-Chapel Hill had had enough. It was time to show UNC management the dissatisfaction and anger of the union. With signs and banners in hand, UE 150 members and supporters shouted "Who are we? UE!" and "Come to the table!" during speeches by UNC system-president Molly Broad, Governor Jim Hunt and Chancellor Moeser.

Workers and supporters passed out hundreds of flyers detailing the total lack of respect for workers on management's part and calling on students, faculty and supporters to call Chancellor Moeser and demand that he meet with representatives of UE 150. Dozens of workers' signatures were gathered on a pledge for justice petition calling on management to once again attend regular negotiation sessions with the union.

At the end of the rally, energized workers and supporters dispersed through the crowd handing out flyers and gave interviews to the press. On University Day, which is meant to celebrate the founding of UNC 207 years ago, UE Local 150 led the UNC community in celebrating those who are truly responsible for the founding, building and success of UNC: the workers.

Public Service Workers Union Takes Message to Voters

On November 7 the North Carolina Public Service Workers Union-UE Local 150, had members at polling places in 15 cities urging thousands of North Carolinians to vote yes on a \$3.1 billion educational bond for state-funded universities and community colleges. The bond is for the construction of new buildings, facilities and other educational needs. However, the bond did not address the needs of the workers within those institutions.

The UE 150 election day mobilization was aimed at sending a popular message calling on citizens to support the demands and needs of UNC and Community College System workers as a commitment of administering the bond. The election day literature issued the following call to voters:

To assure that the Bond provides quality service and justice on the job for the workers, we need ongoing public support in calling on UNC and Community College Systems to do the following:

- * Meet-and-Confer - set up a system so that workers representing various areas have ongoing and direct input into decisions about working conditions.
- * Adequate staffing - hire more workers to deal with the existing and future buildings and workloads.
- * Wages - pay all workers family supporting living wages and benefits.
- * Equipment - provide adequate and safe equipment and supplies to do quality work.
- * No Privatization - all staff should be equally covered by state pay ranges, benefits and policies.

UE150 members also held a press conference on November 3 at the UNC System Office of General Administration to announce the election day mobilization and to call on UNC President Molly Broad to be accountable to the needs of the workers.

North Carolina residents were asked to Call UNC System President Molly Broad (919) 962-1000 and Community College System President Martin Lancaster (919) 733-7051 to express support for the worker demands.(The Bond Passed)

Vermont American Workers Continue Fight Against Racism

On November 1, about 40 Black Vermont American workers belonging to the North Carolina Industrial Workers Union (a non-majority union representing about 40% of the workers) and supporters held a press conference in front of the plant to protest Vermont management's failure to address the escalating atmosphere of racism at the plant. In May, workers held a press conference announcing the formation of their union.

Within the past several months, a white employee called a Black woman a "black bitch" and on another occasion in the cafeteria she loudly referred to African Americans as "niggers." There were no actions taken by Vermont management to discipline or counsel the white worker.

Over the past two years Vermont workers have reported finding a hangman's noose in the bathroom, racist writing on the walls, people wearing confederate flags on their t-shirts and cars and the use of racist epithets by white employees to Black workers.

Management issued a memo in 1998, stating that harassment would not be tolerated. Its first action immediately afterward was to order Black workers not to wear clothing and symbols depicting Black pride, such as Dr. King t-shirts

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Labor Notes Conference

April 20-22, 2001

Can Labor Change the World?
-Strategies for the 21st Century
Detroit, Michigan

Deaf School Workers Support Union President

On October 19, UE150 members packed the hearing room of the North Carolina State Personnel Commission (SPC) to hear closing arguments in case of Larry Wellman, President of the Wilson School for the Deaf UE150 Chapter.

In April of this year, Wellman won his case hands down before an administrative law judge, who found that he was wrongfully fired for alleged "sleeping" and was a victim of race discrimination and retaliation for assisting co-workers in fighting racism and other injustices at the school.

The SPC, despite the favorable ruling from a judge who heard and reviewed several days of live testimony and evidence, has the power to make its own ruling without regard to the findings and ruling of the judge. This power of the SPC has been slightly modified, now requiring it to accept the findings of evidence of the judge (even though it can make other findings) as a result of the lobby day efforts of UE150 in June. However, this change did not go into effect prior to the SPC hearing.

Thus far the campaign to reinstate Wellman and to end racism and unfair treatment for workers at the school, has seen several of the guilty parties of the racist atmosphere leave their jobs. Many believe in anticipation of the possible reinstatement of Wellman, who has vowed to continue fighting injustices and building the union.

While everyone is very hopeful of Wellman's return to his job; people recognize that the system is less concerned with correcting an injustice and more concerned with maintaining power over the workers at all costs. If Wellman loses at the SPC, the union will take it to the Superior Court and continue to build public support.

Vermont American

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and shirts with the letter "X" claiming that they are "offensive" to some workers.

The racism became strongly apparent about two years ago when Vermont workers saw opposing racism as one of the main motivations for organizing their union. Blacks began speaking out through a newsletter about patterns of discrimination in promotions, write-ups, pay scales and application of policies. They eventually decided to form a union that made the fight against racism a major part of its organizing program.

The plant is about 65% African American, technically having enough to win a Labor Board election and force the company to bargain if the large majority of Blacks voted for the union. Vermont management however, is relying on the racist atmosphere to create divisions and confusion to demoralize the majority and to place the union on the defensive.

The Vermont American struggle is very important in the ongoing development and consolidation of the North Carolina Industrial Workers Union (NCIWU). The NCIWU is a federated union anchoring itself on the basis of forming non-majority unions mainly within the auto and metal working industries as a strategy for initial unionization outside of the formal labor board process.

The NCIWU works to expand its membership and leadership base in several plants within the industry, using available labor laws, constitutional rights and building community support to create space and power for itself to function as a union inside the plant.

Workers in the two main plants initiating the NCIWU have taken advantage of some recent favorable labor board rulings. A ruling giving workers (in shops without established unions) the right to have a co-worker present in meetings where disciplinary action is anticipated, has better enabled them to use their shop steward systems more directly in the plant. The labor board's ruling that "temporary" workers may join unions in the shops they work in, also allows the union to expand its membership.

The NCIWU seeks to position itself to use the labor board process when it feels that it is strong enough at a particular workplace to force the employer to bargain with the union. The NCIWU wants to develop its base initially in several auto and metal working plants throughout Eastern, NC to conduct campaigns for industry-wide standards in wages, benefits, working conditions, environmental justice, community accountability and for collective bargaining and union contracts.



UE 150 Dorothea Dix Chapter Declares Emergency Understaffing and Plan to Organize Public Support

On October 9, 2000, the Dorothea Dix Chapter of UE Local 150, the NC Public Service Workers Union, held its first press conference right at the main entranceway to this major state psychiatric hospital while representatives from the Department of Health and Human Services and Dix administration looked on. The Union declared a state of emergency caused by understaffing. Staff and patients experience dangerous conditions, as there are not enough workers, and the staffing levels that are maintained are dependent on excessive and forced overtime. The Hospital administration itself declared an emergency in September when it had to combine two admissions wards for lack of staff, creating chaotic conditions.

The Union committed itself to mobilizing the broader community to raise awareness and put pressure on the state. This activity comes in the context of a report released by the State Auditor calling for the closing of Dorothea Dix; since then the best any administrator has called for has been a major downsizing. Three TV stations and at least one newspaper covered the activity. Several workers reported that supervisors intimidated workers into not attending.

Since the press conference, the union has circulated its statement and proposals and initiated "More Core Staff NOW!" Red Wednesdays. Workers from throughout the hospital have been wearing red to show solidarity with the demand for better working conditions and more staff. The Union has been

Join UE 150 Today!!

**Call 1-800-815-4946
for more information**

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