
**Organizing the South:
A Southern Strategy
for Labor**

BY THE **BLACK WORKERS FOR JUSTICE**

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ORGANIZING THE SOUTH:
A SOUTHERN STRATEGY FOR LABOR

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ORGANIZING THE SOUTH: A SOUTHERN STRATEGY FOR LABOR

The September 1991 deaths of 25 poultry workers at the Imperial Foods plant in Hamlet, North Carolina has helped draw national attention to the terrible conditions faced by Southern workers and pointed out the urgent need for labor to "Organize the South."

More than simply an urgent need to compensate for the loss in national union memberships, organizing Southern labor is a challenge with major political implications for the progressive and democratic future of the South and the entire US.

The Hamlet story helps one understand the differences between the conditions of workers within the center of the US economy and those of workers on the periphery of this multi-national economy. Southern workers exist mainly in the periphery.

The differences impact both working class consciousness and the general social consciousness in the way Southern workers, Black and white, view themselves politically in the region, country and the world.

Labor movements organizing with fewer resources and less mobility in countries with a limited history of democracy have had more success over the past decade than the US labor movement. They have expanded their ranks and become more of a political force in society for workers. They are driven by far more radical perspectives on issues of democracy and human rights than those that shape the vision and direction of the US labor movement.

These are not abstract motivations. They are grounded in an analysis of the economic, social and political conditions and institutions affecting the working class. They view the labor movement as

part of the broader social movements led by the most oppressed, struggling with a vision for progressive social change and liberation. Thus, their organizing tactics and positions are forced to transcend the limits of the narrow economic and legal boundaries of capitalism's "democratic" options for the working class. This is an important lesson for the US labor movement.

UNDERDEVELOPMENT AND DISEMPOWERMENT: KEY TO BLACK OPPRESSION

The social and racial tensions and divisions within the Southern working class are deeply rooted in the economic and political processes shaping the South's historical development as a region and its fusion with US monopoly capitalism in a relationship always favoring Northern capital. The racist (national) oppression of Black people has been central to the development of capitalism in the South.

The disempowerment of African Americans in their relationships to the major economic, political and social institutions affecting their lives is the central feature and objective of the South's racist system. It is reinforced socially by traditions and social organizations of white supremacy. The South's underdevelopment and scarcity, which disproportionately impacts African Americans, helps to magnify the depth of their oppression.

For example, the South:

- with 28% of the US population, has close to 40% of its poverty;
- has the largest number of working poor families;
- has the largest number of minimum wage workers;
- by 1980, had 2.6 million of all the 4.4 million US temporary workforce;
- has 13 million people with no health insurance;
- has the highest infant mortality rate;
- has the least number of doctors per patient;

- spends 20% less per student in its schools;
- has over half the country's toxic waste.

The defeat of legal segregation did little to change these conditions. US capitalism, in its greed for profit, refused to pay for the major changes needed to improve the quality of life of the majority of people in the South, including failing to close the social and economic gap between the Black and white working class. This gap, however narrow, is used as a margin of white-skin privilege to bribe Southern white workers against uniting with Black workers. Politically and economically, this has weakened all Southern workers as a class. Thus, while legal segregation was formally abolished, the social structure and practices anchoring the racist capitalist economic and political relationships remained.

RACISM: AN ANCHOR TO SUPER-EXPLOIT ALL SOUTHERN WORKERS

The "right-to-work" laws in 11 of the 12 Southern states were enacted in the late 1940s and 1950s, during the period of legal segregation and political disenfranchisement for African Americans in the South. While anti-union, politically they were segregationist laws, fueled by a racist sentiment to prevent Black and white unity, so as to protect the political power of Southern business interests over the Southern states in their relationship with Northern capital. Thus, there was no movement among white workers to oppose these laws.

Unions in the South during this time shied away from challenging legal segregation. Therefore, no connection was made between the issue of Black voting rights and the right of workers to organize unions, and thus, no efforts to build a campaign for Black and white worker unity to repeal the "right-to-work" laws. Instead, they chose to avoid the issue of Black voting rights altogether and withdraw from concerted organizing. The "AFL-CIO Executive Council backed

away from the Southern drive it had been expected to launch immediately after the merger."¹

The pull out came at a crucial time when the Southern Black civil rights movement was beginning a major offensive against legal segregation. It would have been greatly strengthened by the inclusion of a trade union movement raising the workers' demands, as the struggle in South Africa so clearly demonstrates.

The year-long Montgomery bus boycott beginning in 1955, which helped to launch the mass Southern civil rights movement, "was in constant need of funds and moral support. But the AFL-CIO gave neither."²

Had it not been for Black unionists like E.D. Nixon, local president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in Montgomery, Alabama, and a major strategist for the boycott, there might have been a deep social alienation from unions among many African Americans. In any case, there is still a feeling that unions are not an organic part of their social and political struggle.

During the 1960s, big Northern-based corporations and banks began major restructuring in order to better position their industries and investments in the South by the time of the defeat of legal segregation. Desegregation led to Black workers becoming a major section of the South's industrial working class and the core for the huge super-profits generated by the old and new manufacturing companies in the region.

As US economic and political interests in Third World countries was being challenged by the national liberation struggles and revolutions during the 1960s and '70s, the exploitation of cheap labor in the South became all the more important for maintaining US corporate profit levels.

US consumer markets abroad were also challenged during the 1970s, in particular by West Germany and Japan. This caused a chronic over-production of US goods, causing high unemployment and a recession.

To maximize profits during this period, the big corporations held back on reinvesting in their oldest, largest and major capital accumulating industries, chiefly in the North. These were the primary bases of organized labor's strength to challenge the corporate monopolies as a labor movement. Unions were forced on a major defensive during the 1970s and '80s, and issues of race and sex discrimination as they related to concessions and lay-offs were not given any priority by the unions without a struggle by the Black workers. This shows the importance of having Black, women's and oppressed nationality caucuses within the unions and the rank-and-file movements.

Over the past 20 years, funds from the national unions for new organizing and even servicing in the South were grossly insufficient. Even today, the organizing departments in the South for most unions are made up of a director and a few organizing staff. Building and cultivating important relationships with community organizations and struggles are therefore difficult, as a result of the cost-cutting measures and political priorities that are motivated by a narrow business unionism.

The threat of Northern plant closings and runaway-shops moving to the South during the 1970s and early '80s was a corporate gun used to force concessions from unionized workers:

"The automobile and electrical goods industries are well known for their use of this tactic.... In fact, between 1975 and 1980, GM opened a total of fourteen new plants, with eight located in the deep South and one in Mexico.... This permitted GM to effectively use the threat of shifting production to its non-union shops as a bargaining lever in its Northern plant negotiations."³

According to findings from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Brookings Institute covering union contracts negotiated during 1982-'85, worker "concessions may have netted capital anywhere from \$76 billion to \$152 billion in three and a half years. This latter figure is greater than the average annual profits in manufacturing for

the same period."⁴ This finding is important because it helps to point out how an unorganized South directly affects unionized workers in the North and thus, the importance of a Southern labor movement with links to the US trade union movement to provide solidarity on both fronts.

THE SOUTH FOOTS BILL FOR NORTHERN CAPITAL'S SHIFT

Unable to accumulate enough surplus capital from their share of the Southern market to finance new major companies and to compete internationally during the late 1950s and '60s, the Southern business establishment, through control of political power, used the public's wealth as a source for financing the private sector. This practice continues.

Billions have been spent through the use of industrial bonds, state and locally financed training programs, utilities and highway construction and big tax breaks. So-called "non-profit" mechanisms, such as industrial bond authorities, economic development corporations, foreign trade zones, etc., have been set up through chambers of commerce as vehicles to transfer public funds and resources to the private sector. A working peoples' coalition, anchored by an alliance between labor and Black political power, must form the basis for an independent mass political party to challenge the political policies of capital in the South and at the federal level.

The Southeast gained 5.2 million jobs between 1975 and 1984. "Over eighty percent of Southern manufacturing growth took place in nonmetropolitan (rural) areas. Much of this growth has been attributed to the establishment of branch plants by large northern corporations."⁵

Many of the South's new branch plants came out of industries which were not central to the South's economic history. Conse-

quently, the class consciousness of many Southern workers, particularly African American workers from the Black Belt, lacks the element of industrial consciousness.

There are workers at auto windshield and dashboard panel plants in North Carolina, for example, who think they are part of the windshield and dashboard industries. North Carolina alone has 238 manufacturers of auto parts. When demanding fair wages, most of these workers have no awareness of the industrial scale to shape their demands around.

"A 1986 study prepared for the Joint Economic Committee of Congress revealed that 42 percent of all new jobs in the South in the first half of the decade paid less than \$7,000 a year."⁶ This has been a factor enabling US capitalism to maintain Southern workers at the lowest level of a multi-tier labor market. This problem is further compounded by the fact that most trade unions have moved away from industrial unionism.

The branch plants, while employing sizable numbers of Black workers, customarily employ majority white workforces. Many of these plants locate in the Black Belt and often recruit majority white workers from outside these Black majority counties. So in addition to the companies getting tax breaks and other incentives from the already poor counties, the majority of the workers also pay no taxes in the county where the plant is located. Finding issues to form community-labor coalitions around as soon as possible is very important, especially when the racial compositions of the workforce and community populations are substantially different. When issues come up, the coalitions serve as frameworks allowing for discussions.

African American workers are still largely concentrated in the older and/or more labor intensive industries, like textiles, apparels, furniture and lumber; in food processing areas of poultry, catfish and agricultural products; in the service sector of hospitals, nursing homes and hotels; and as public workers in sanitation and other municipal services. A growing number of Latino workers are being brought into

these primarily Black Belt industries. Race, sex and language are factors used to divide and weaken the workers. With the exception of farmworkers, these are the most exploited workers in the South, especially African American and Latino women. African American women are central to organizing in these industries.

AFRICAN AMERICAN AND LABOR ALLIANCE IS KEY

The last 30 years have been crucial for the direction of the Southern regional and US monopoly capitalist interests. Dr. King's new direction of expanding the struggles around civil rights to include workers' rights was a major threat to the national and international shifts and reorganization of US capitalism. This direction had a potential of shifting the leadership of the African American liberation movement more toward the Black working class.

The Memphis (Tennessee) Sanitation Workers' strike indicated just how much of a challenge the direction of the Southern-led Black liberation movement was to US capitalism in the late 1960s:

- The strikers defied court orders for them to return to work; faced curfews; braved chemical mace, tear gas, clubbings and other police terror; and withstood an invasion by the national guard.

- The Black community's base was key in anchoring the struggle. Its financial contribution alone was estimated at \$100,000. They initiated Black and white community-labor support committees that visited landlords, utility companies, loan companies, and retail stores, and succeeded in pressuring them into a promise that no evictions would take place for the duration of the strike and that a moratorium would be declared on the collection of all debts from the strikers.

Daily marches through the streets and nightly meetings were held in the churches and union-contributed halls. And consumer boycotts were called to place pressure on the wider economic base.

- AFSCME's decision to bring its national leadership into Mem-

phis to directly help lead the struggle was key in winning support from the state AFL-CIO Central Labor Councils and in building some degree of national labor solidarity for the struggle.

There is a deep emotional attachment within the psyche of African Americans in the South to the civil rights movement and Dr. King as its central figure. Dr. King's death was a deeply felt loss. Many of the community groups and churches in the South emerged and were active in this movement. His new direction in support of workers' rights and unionization impacted on the thinking of many of these activists and sympathizers, even if only for reasons of the symbolic message of his assassination: Giving his life in support of labor. Every effort should be made to tap this sentiment among African Americans when organizing workers in the South. A strong popular cultural movement is essential.

The power of an African American and labor alliance helps to underscore the importance of the centrality of Black workers in union campaigns. Even in workplaces where Blacks only make up a sizable minority, the centrality of Black workers could mean the difference between victory and defeat. By winning the majority of Black workers, campaigns can be won even with a minority of the votes of white workers.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

As of 1989, there was an estimated 31.5 million nonagricultural workers in the South: 18.0%-manufacturing; 24.4%-wholesale/retail; 22.6%-service; 17.5%-government; 5.5%-transport/utilities; 5.3%-construction; 1.2%-mining. In 1990, only 14 percent of the South's non-agricultural workforce belonged to unions.⁷

The Southern states also have the lowest amounts of unemployment, workers' compensation and welfare benefits. Southern legislators have not, in the main, pushed for increases in these benefits, so as

not to allow them to compete with the low wages paid by employers. This helps to hold Southern workers hostage to low paid jobs.

Day labor pools and temporary worker agencies feed off of the unemployed. Along with paying low wages, they also eliminate or reduce employer responsibility for worker benefits, such as health insurance, vacation pay, pensions, etc., that may be being paid to permanent workers on the same job. In the long run, this helps to freeze and even reduce wages and benefits for permanent workers. Making temporary workers permanent after 90 days should be a major demand.

These temporary worker agencies also become striker replacement pools, used by the companies to recruit scab labor during strikes. Unemployment councils involving the unemployed in campaigns demanding government funded job creation and training with living wages, demanding increases in government funded worker "safety-net" benefits, and opposing striker replacement is a must for a Southern labor movement.

The passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) threatens to further lower the wages and quality of life for Southern workers. They will now be forced to compete with lower paid Mexican labor as part of a common market (North American trade block), as opposed to the traditional intra-regional competition between the Southern states.

Many of the companies moving to Mexico from the South were runaways from the North, arriving South mainly in the '60s and '70s. Many were profitable, like Schlage Lock and Proctor Silex in North Carolina. Because of the long term tax breaks, many will not have paid major taxes before they leave. For example, the General Electric plant in Lowndes County, Alabama, the poorest county in the state and the 7th poorest in the country, received a 40 year tax break in 1985. Many companies are big polluters of the communities and have caused long term environmental damage, and many have unsafe working conditions causing high numbers of accidents and deaths.

Most are not properly monitored by OSHA or other state and local agencies, the worst case scenario being the Imperial Foods Company in Hamlet, NC, also a Northern runaway.

The huge public-financed incentives to private corporations, along with the outward shift of major manufacturing jobs from the region that will increase because of the NAFTA, will negatively impact on prospects for future regional economic growth and social development.

Federal funds to aid the South's economic development, particularly in the rural and Black Belt areas, were drastically reduced over the past decade. Between 1980 and 1988, federal aid for rural America declined from "\$10 billion, including \$7 billion in General Revenue Sharing, to less than \$1.2 billion, with zero Revenue Sharing funds."⁸ This has led to a major fiscal crisis in the budgets of the Southern states, causing drastic cuts in public employment and services.

Privatization in the public sector is being used to generate operational and finance capital. Many formerly county owned hospitals have been sold to private corporations. Some cities are contracting out public services like sanitation and emergency rescue services. Downsizing these operations is often the first step and indication of the coming privatization.

Major Southern businesses, while supporting the NAFTA, must control a greater share of political power over the national government in order to protect their regional markets. Accumulation, and more direct access to larger sources of finance capital within the Southern region, becomes essential for the predominantly Southern-based economic establishment to compete nationally and internationally.

The recent mergers that formed the Southern-based Nation's Bank, making it the 3rd largest US bank, help to concentrate the process of generating and consolidating Southern capital for financing old and new ventures. "To date, there are 59 of the Fortune 500

corporations headquartered in the 12 Southern states. They account for 6.3 percent of the total sales of these major corporations."⁹ These corporations will probably get the bulk of the Southern finance capital.

One might suspect that many of the older and more labor intensive Southern companies, in order to survive and expand, will be forced to merge into regional conglomerates connected in some way to the major Southern corporation. These conglomerates might also influence decisions around organizing targets, tactics and corporate campaign strategies.

This corporate consolidation, however, will not bring about any significant improvements in wages and the general standard of living for the majority of Southern workers. Cheap labor will continue to be the main source for generating the huge profits for finance capital. Organizing in the South will therefore, in the main, continue to rest upon being able to build a mass movement among low wage workers.

The poultry industry, for example, must be a major area of industrial concentration and key base for a Southern labor movement. "The poultry is the biggest agribusiness in the region today, employing 20,000 contract farmers and 150,000 workers in slaughterhouses and processing plants."¹⁰ It has transformed what was essentially a peripheral sector industry, once made up of "hundreds of competing mom-and-pop farms, feedmills, and processors,"¹¹ into a major manufacturing sector industry.

Small businesses, after some protest, may be given some token loans to pacify them and to discourage them from aligning with the workers' movement. Most of the small Black businesses are owned by ministers. In addition to directly involving ministers in the community/labor coalitions, it is important for workers in their churches to actively build direct membership support for workers' struggles and organizing.

The South has a large amount of foreign investment capital and industries. It is a major sphere for foreign competition with US cor-

porations. Japanese and German based corporations and banks are the major foreign investors in the South. Direct economic agreements with these countries by Southern states could experience challenges from the federal government in the future, if major trade questions remain a problem. Thus, there are tensions among the Southern business interests that stem from the degree and types of ties that they have with the various US and foreign multi-national corporations and banks.

While recognizing the particular regional characteristics facing labor and capital in the South, we must keep in mind the larger objective situation, which is that all of US capitalism is in a major crisis.

Even the so-called liberal sections of US capital are advocating right-wing policies like opposing the anti-striker replacement bill, supporting the US-Mexico Free Trade Agreement, encouraging government strike breaking as with PATCO and the recent CSX railroad strike, and increasing the numbers of police (instead of jobs) in the inner-cities, etc.

The tensions within the Southern and national corporate establishment should be utilized where possible as part of labor's political strategy. However, a Southern labor movement must maintain its political independence from all corporate controlled political parties like the Democrats and Republicans and must not side with protectionism or other pro-corporate campaigns and legislation.

The workplace structures which foster worker and management cooperation are a major obstacle against union organizing. They are known by various titles which promote the "team concept." They exist partly to convince workers that unions are no longer needed to empower them on the shop floor. They give workers the impression of being a more "self-directed" workforce, leading to speed-ups, job cuts and other measures "decided" by the teams that increase corporate profits in the name of improving "quality" and being "competitive."

For many Southern workers who lack union experience, these “team concepts” will be their introduction to so-called worker “participation,” “decision making” and “empowerment.” Ministers, elected officials and civic leaders are sometimes invited to sit in on “team” meetings. What makes matters more difficult is that they represent an advance from the traditional labor and management relationships experienced by the majority of Southern workers.

Union agitation against the “teams” during organizing campaigns should be flexible. In fact, tactics must be developed that somehow use the “teams” to the advantage of union organizing.

THE TASKS AHEAD

This condensed assessment raises a range of challenges — political, organizational, social, structural and tactical questions that must be addressed in a long term organizing strategy. Much of the assessment should be seen as indicators in need of further examination.

Informed by this basic analyses and the pressing conditions facing Southern workers, the Black Workers For Justice (BWFJ) sees the main task as building an Organize the South Coalition and movement. An Organize the South Coalition is a necessary vehicle to launch a united militant South-wide campaign out of which a popular based labor movement is built. This will strengthen labor nationally.

With many limitations, the BWFJ has been building the Workers Fairness Campaign as a contribution to such an effort, setting for itself three major tasks: 1) the knitting together of a popular workers’ fight-back movement throughout the South; 2) the building of Organize the South Support Committees outside of the South; and 3) the building of an Organize the South Network (in the South) as a democratic framework to evolve over time a strategic and programmatically united Organize the South Coalition.

The Workers Fairness Campaign seeks to create an identity, confidence and political presence of a workers’ movement in the South. In several areas in North Carolina it is helping to develop and bring forward worker organizations, leadership and allies as part of a developing infrastructure and core for concerted labor organizing.

Community/labor alliances have been initiated by others throughout the South around short term worker struggles. Uniting these fight-backs at the regional level is a major task. This could begin by the various struggles agreeing to promote a common fight-back slogan, at least one or more common demands, and agreeing to hold some planned meetings for information sharing, sum-ups, training and education, planning, broad decision making and coordination. This development process will not happen overnight.

EXPANDING OUR ORGANIZING METHODOLOGY

If we think in terms of a strategy, we will be concerned with the Southern working class and their aspirations as a social force. This means viewing labor organizing as a way of empowering the Southern working class as part of a larger social movement with a vision and program for radical social change. Thus, labor organizing will also help to strengthen the leadership of workers and their class demands in struggles around other important issues like national healthcare, unemployment, repealing “right-to-work” legislation, housing, education, the environment and Black political power. But if we only think in terms of gaining more union membership, our strategy will have a very limited political role.

The lack of widespread union organizing to help empower Southern workers has forced workers, particularly Black workers, to build labor type organizations as part of the Black communities’ struggles for economic and social justice and political power. Many have reached out to help white workers in the workplace.

There are a number of different organizations — trade unions, advocacy groups, newspapers, women's groups, health groups, workplace committees, workers' associations, workers' schools — that see themselves as linked to the working class and furthering its interests. However, they are not consolidated around a common analysis and strategy and are not yet connected by way of a coalition or campaign. Indeed, our beginning strategy must be built around and shaped by the types of social organizations already in place.

There exist among these forces tactical and sometimes fundamental differences around issues of race, gender, political independence and US foreign policy. But generally all agree that Southern workers are brutally exploited and must be organized. Therefore, the process of building a coalition to organize the South must move in a direction of achieving a unity that can encompass differences.

Obviously, there will continue to be organizing efforts by individual unions in the South. A long term strategy does not seek to interfere with these efforts. In fact, these efforts should continue to be supported. But we must keep in mind that: "The organization of a few workplaces here and there will not alter the balance of forces between capital and labor. Every bit as much as their counterparts in auto or steel, workers in these industries must be organized on an industrial basis to have any significant bargaining power."¹²

Southern organizing cannot rely on the principle of "hot-shops" and short term card signing blitzes as the main feature of union campaigns. Often after winning elections from these short term campaigns, the lack of worker education and consciousness about the union, and the union's lack of a relationship with the community, leaves it in a weak position to conduct the struggle for the first contract.

It is therefore important to try and bring these organizing efforts within the strategic framework when and where possible. In relatively small areas like a city, county and even a state, the strategic approach should be to link individual union drives to community and workplace

based networks in an effort to build a "multi-plant and multi-union organizing movement."¹³

It is also important that union organizing not be restricted to the approach of conducting NLRB recognition elections. The bureaucratic process is easily manipulated by corporate union busters, and the conservative rulings have undermined favorable laws. Even when employers are determined by the NLRB to have broken the law, they receive no substantial penalties to discourage future violations.

The global economic crisis and the major changes that are occurring in the economic and social organization of the US working class because of the corporate reorganization make it clear that a Southern labor movement, as is true for the larger US labor movement, must move beyond the traditional economic bargaining issues and definitions of a union and labor movement.

The struggle to win union recognition and a contract, while very important, cannot, especially with the recession and the weaknesses (while changing) in labor's solidarity, be the sole factor determining the success or failure of a labor movement in this period. Building a mass movement of thousands and millions of workers struggling around common demands would be a much more important measurement of the potential of a labor movement to empower the working class against corporate exploitation and for social change.

The formation of an Organize the South Coalition should not be viewed as creating a new labor federation, although such a development should not be ruled out or opposed as a principle. Suspicions or allegations of "dual unionism" are unfounded. To the contrary, it has been the lack of unionization in the South that has contributed to the decline in the memberships of national unions. Labor organizing in the South, whatever its forms or union affiliation, can only help to strengthen the US labor movement. Such suspicions and allegations will probably continue in an effort to prevent the emergence of an independent labor coalition that does not fall under the jurisdiction of the AFL-CIO.

It would be an error in strategy for an Organize the South Coalition to become subordinated to any particular union. This would contribute to the existing conflicts between unions over jurisdiction and threaten to fragment any concerted strategy. It may also discourage other unions from participating in building or joining such a coalition. The principle of unity in action around issues and struggles and organizational independence in decision making must be a guiding principle of the coalition in its relationships with all unions, whether in or outside of the AFL-CIO, and with all organizations.

LAYING THE FRAMEWORK FOR INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM

An Organize the South Coalition must build new indigenous, democratically elected structures that unite various individuals, organizations and unions in the different areas of work essential to the strategy. It would help to foster industrial organizing committees (IOCs) and campaigns over time, centered around the leadership of committees and local unions of the workers in the workplace.

At the county level, Workers' Unity Councils (WUC) should be formed to unite workplace committees as they are formed in the various workplaces. Local unions should be welcomed into these WUCs. There should be no requirement for them to disaffiliate from other Central Labor Councils to join the WUCs.

WUCs would help to strengthen and build inplant committees. It would have various sub-committees: leaflet brigades; training on developing inplant newsletters and methods of building department strength of inplant committees; a labor defense fund; an unemployed committee; a women's committee to help address women workers' issues, leadership and sexist issues within the WUC; and other community and technical sub-support committees.

The WUCs will sponsor workers' speak-outs, where workers rally at a church or community institution and speak openly about

their various issues and fight-back efforts. This will help to establish the area-wide sentiment and identity of the developing workers' movement. It will help to reduce the isolation and fear of inplant organizing and struggles. A strong women workers and cultural movement will be central to strengthening and popularizing the speak-out movement.

A major task of the WUCs are to build IOCs. The IOCs bring together workplace committees from the different area workplaces that are in the same basic industries and sectors into a coordinating body in order to develop a plan for industrial concentration. Statewide and regional meetings would be held to bring these workers together into a strategy of wider concentration.

Region-wide conferences could be held to sum-up the work and degree of consolidation of the movement and decide on broad unifying campaigns and slogans around issues, like Justice for Hamlet workers, national health-care, OSHA reform, environmental justice, repeal of "right-to-work" laws, etc. United campaigns around these types of issues help to build a climate of worker solidarity. With the weakened state of the trade union movement, the lack of a climate of worker solidarity leaves the various labor struggles, from union organizing campaigns to strikes, increasingly more isolated.

A national solidarity movement in support of Southern organizing is an essential aspect of the strategy. It helps to expand regional campaigns into national campaigns by mobilizing trade union and community direct action support and by making links where possible between the issues facing Northern workers with those facing workers in the South. It helps to raise funds and resources for campaigns and strategy and organizes activities within the unions that educate members and involves them in concrete projects. Organize the South Support Committees should be formed in cities outside of the South as centers for building and coordinating the Organize the South Solidarity Movement.

A Southern labor journal is needed to help promote comradesly

discussions and debates among coalition participants and others, around various struggles, tactics, demands, policies and issues of the developing Organize the South Movement. This will help to develop and shape a broad Southern worker perspective and labor consensus and thereby further help in forging a working class political and ideological unity.

The convening of a Southern labor congress must be a major goal of an Organize the South Coalition. This will bring together the many organizations, unions and activists involved in workers' rights strategies for Southern labor organizing. A congress would help to unite local organizations throughout the South engaged in common areas of work into region-wide organizations with a single program or at least into region-wide coordinating bodies with a common focus. The various Southern conferences on labor and community issues are an important aspect of the process of unifying Southern labor activists. They help to facilitate organizational relationships and serve as a forum for the development of common work and conclusions necessary for a sentiment and movement to convene a Southern labor congress.

The US left has historically been an important organizing and politicizing force in the workers' movement. However, the left is fragmented, unfocused, and is undergoing efforts at organizational and ideological reevaluation and regrouping. To be effective, the unifying and refocusing process of the left must be done more organically as part of the workers' and oppressed peoples' movements, including the movement to organize labor in the South. However, any attempt to coopt the Organize the South Coalition building process into a narrow organizational or ideologically-exclusive framework would do serious damage and greatly set-back the process and movement.

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST RACISM IS KEY

The struggle against racism is central to building a unified labor movement in the South. It must be concrete. But it must also create an atmosphere of equality, and of solidarity and be educational. It must not simply be reactive but must have a program and set of demands. This is also true for the struggle against sexism. Strengthening and supporting the movement for Black political power is a key aspect of the struggle against racism. As Black workers come to the forefront of this movement, the issues of workers' rights will become a more prominent demand associated with Black political power.

The following are some *racist, sexist and narrow views and practices by many unions*. They need to be opposed and eliminated through staff discussion and education and as part of the demands of the union rank and file democratic movements:

- The main struggle in the union organizing campaign is between the professional union organizer and the union buster. Worker organization and power on the shop floor is secondary and might threaten the union campaign by causing the employer to correct the problems and leave the union with no campaign issues.

- Majority white and male organizing staffs are more acceptable than majority Black and female. Union literature and organizing committees should fear projecting large numbers and images of "militant" Black and female worker leadership where sizable numbers of white and male workers exist.

- The concrete problems of racism and sexism raised by organizers should be discouraged, because it causes divisions among the workers and suspicions and tensions between staff.

- Low wage Southern workers should be treated differently than higher paid workers: they should be forced sooner to show proof of commitment to unionization because the dues returns are not worth the serious investment.

- Where pro-union rank and file organizations already exist, efforts should be made to discourage worker loyalty and association with them in order to gain their full loyalty for the union.

- The union after losing an election has no responsibility, beyond labor board charges, for supporting the fight-back efforts of workers who are fired for union activism. Pack-up immediately after defeat and leave the area.

Advancing the Southern movement beyond its mainly civil rights orientation is a must in order to help bring about a favorable shift for the masses in the political and economic power relations in the South. This cannot be done with radical slogans alone. Workers must be organized and empowered as a conscious political, as well as economic, force for social change. More than 90% of Black people are from the working class. Organizing a labor movement as a way of empowering the working class in the South must become a major goal of the movement for Black political power. Thus, Black workers as an organized force must play a central role in organizing a broader rank and file-controlled, democratic and non-racial labor movement in the South. **SO GOES THE SOUTH, SO GOES THE COUNTRY! BUILD THE ORGANIZE THE SOUTH COALITION!**

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