

# The BWFJ Organizer

Internal Bulletin Of The Black Workers For Justice

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## 1993 Worker's School Highlights New Direction For "Organize The South" Strategy

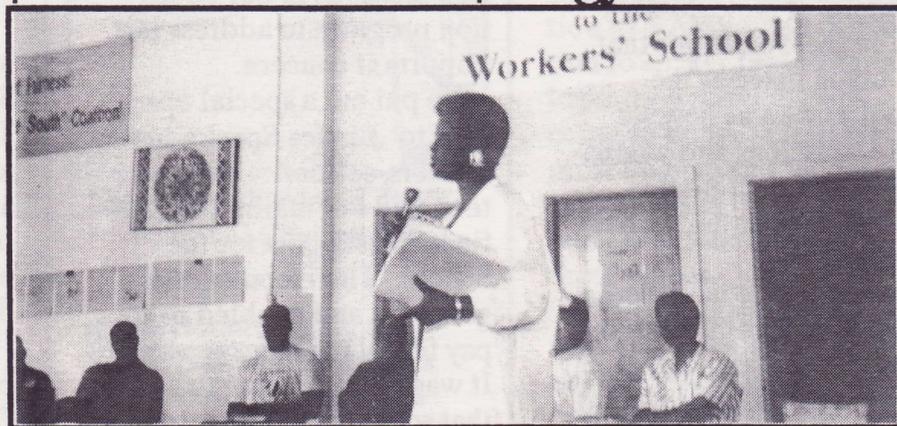
by Ajamu Dillahunt

The Workers' School, titled "Organize the South, A Strategy for Labor" was held at the Franklinton Center in Bricks, N.C. during the weekend of July 9-11.

As is the case with most of our Schools, it was organized to tackle a major problem facing workers in our efforts to organize the South and to acquire general and specific skills to help us in developing workplace committees, local chapters and unions.

The July School brought together fifty-two (52) members, supporters and guests to exchange, learn, teach and debate several issues that are critical to all of our efforts to empower working people in general and African American workers in particular.

The key strategy question was the idea of workers building and joining unions that do not have a contract with the employer and who have not won an election held by the National Labor Relations Board. Unions without a contract or



minority unions as they are sometimes called because they may not have yet received the support of the majority of the employees at a particular workplace, was the subject of major consideration.

The workshop dealing with this question was led by Clyde Summers, an attorney from the University of Pennsylvania who specializes in labor law. Summers has a rank and file democratic union orientation so his discussion, while grounded in law, was directed to and understandable to rank and file activists. His presentation is available on an unedited

tape and may be available soon in pamphlet form.

The ideas discussed had been implemented in part by the Standard Products workers, so the discussion was not abstract but based on realities that many of our members and their co-workers are dealing with at this time.

Other workshops dealt with problems of racism and white supremacy in organizing, developing workplace committees and how to do leaflets and newsletters. These workshops were well received but as could be expected, participants felt that there should have been

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## Workers' School, cont.

more time for them. These suggestions will be kept in mind for future schools.

The second major plenary session was on the topic of "*Women Workers Are Leaders, Too!*" This generated some of the most stimulating and important discussions of the School. The content addressed the dynamics of male domination in the workshops that had taken place at the school as well as how we make conscious and aggressive efforts to promote women's leadership in our organizations.

Creating an atmosphere that makes it comfortable for women to participate in discussions received a great deal of attention, as did the necessity to share household responsibilities, including, and beyond, child care.

Evaluations from participants were very favorable. Many of the comments and suggestions

will be incorporated into future schools and training activities.

One of the notable comments was the fact that more opportunities should have been made available for new members and activists to make comments about their work and questions they may have had. We will continue our efforts to develop workers centered or popular education methods in our education program to address this important concern.

We put out a special appeal to **Justice Speaks** subscribers, solidarity committees, and our mailing list for financial support for the School. The response was generous and enabled us to pay for all of our expenses. It was very inspiring to see that so many people appreciate our work and see that it has great potential to make important contributions to organizing the South, workers empowerment and Black liberation.

Plans and consultation are underway with Georgia and

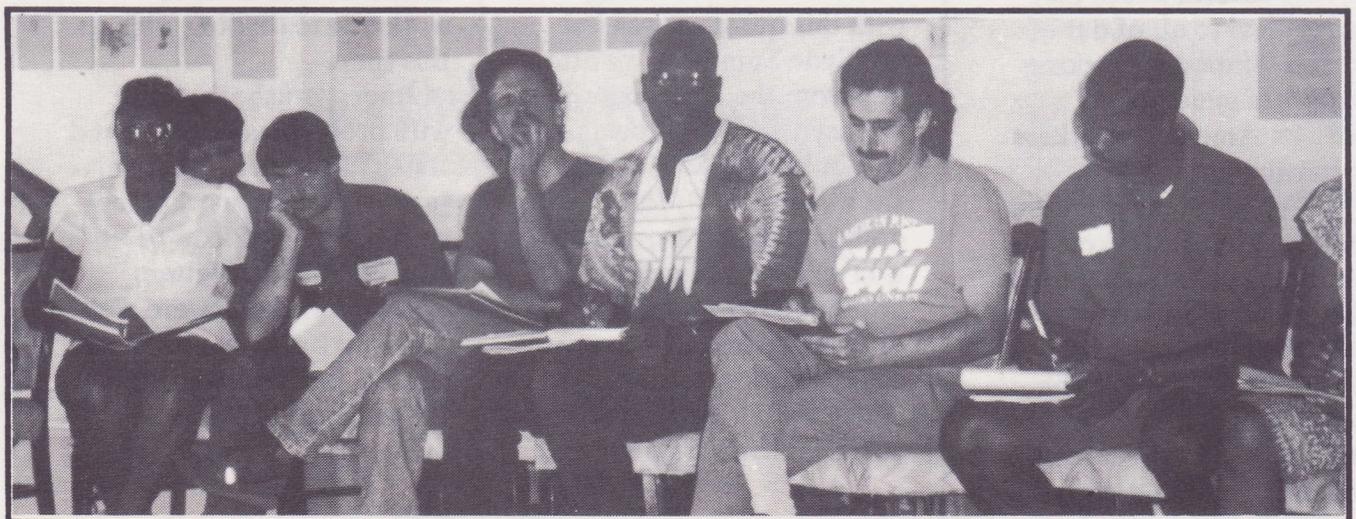


Ajamu Dillahunt, BWFJ  
Director of Education

Mississippi chapters for a School in January of 1994. This is part of our commitment to bringing education and training to our membership by overcoming problems of distance and limited financial resources.

Several other educational projects are underway. Chapters will soon be receiving information about the Spanish language study program for our members. It is based on the "*Talking Unity/Hablando Unidad*" Column that appears in **Justice Speaks**. Also, first issue of the Education Bulletin

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## "Overall, We Should Be Proud Of Our Accomplishments This Year"

by *Saladin Muhammad*

Greetings BWFJ members. This year has been a period of organizational consolidation. New BWFJ Chapters have been initiated, which includes four located outside of North Carolina. Important work has occurred on systematizing existing Chapters.

Justice Speaks has made important advances in the area of consolidation. It is also the best source of news about Southern workers and African American struggles. I am told this wherever I go. JS will contribute greatly to the ongoing work of organizational consolidation and to the leadership of the BWFJ and others in the movement to Organize The South.

We have learned much about the trade union movement this year. We have members working as union organizers, as officers on local unions; and members have been part of union campaigns at various workplaces. While all of the experiences have not been pleasant, they have produced lessons that can help to improve on our future work.

We have learned that we must not be afraid to propose new organizing approaches to union or-



Saladin Muhammad, BWFJ National Chairperson

ganizers and leading staff. While they will not always accept our proposals, it is clear that the difficulties in organizing is forcing the unions to consider other approaches and to build relations with forces already in place whether they like them or fully agree with their programs or not. We must be in place in order to influence the direction of trade unions.

We have also learned that there are many rank-and-file trade unionists and some staff that unite with the BWFJ perspective. We must build closer relationships with these forces, including recruitment into the BWFJ. Our ability to influence the trade unions will depend on having support from these forces who can help to prevent the

bureaucrats of the unions from trying to isolate the BWFJ as some kind of "disruptive" element.

There are a number of issues that are bringing forward these rank-and-file forces. Single Payer National Health Care, opposition to NAFTA and opposition to striker replacement legislation immediately come to mind. The BWFJ must be involved in these campaigns in order to meet and build relations with these forces.

While we must utilize available laws "protecting" the concerted activity among workers at the workplace as they attempt to resist their mistreatment, we are learning to place emphases on building strong rank-and-file democratic organizations connected to a broader strategy of mobilizing popular pressure against the injustices of the companies and the political power of the system that protects them.

Having a workplace organization often leads to the temptation to wage shop-floor battles against the company in order to give workers a sense of their own power. Shop-floor battles are very important in this regard, but

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Angaza Laughinghouse, BWFJ Vice-Chair meeting with workers

they must be considered carefully, and we must have goals in addition to winning the immediate struggle that relates to the long term strategy of organizing and empowering workers, such as recruiting more workers to the in-plant organization, training workplace leadership, educating the larger workforce and associating the workers in the particular struggles with worker activists at other workplaces to get a sense of the larger picture and strategy. We must always consider our strengths over all when pressing for a decisive action at a particular workplace. Without considering the possible negative consequences of a tactic and relying on the law (even if unconsciously) as the main defense, we are failing to properly grasp the principle of waging the struggle

(as much as possible) on our own terms.

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**The public workers organizing has made some important advances. It is making the break through of building a statewide Workers Unity Movement and developing statewide union movement.**

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This is an important development for the Workers Fairness Campaign. The WFC needs the example of a statewide workers movement to help launch a broader movement in NC and throughout the South.

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**BWFJ members not working in the public sector must also contribute to the further building of the NC Public Service Workers Association.**

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Any relatives and friends who are public workers should be linked to this movement. BWFJ Chapters must mobilize broader support for campaigns like the safety shoe allowance and opposition to downsizing. Building this movement must be given a major priority. The MLK Paid Holiday Campaign is also very important. It is helping to establish organizing committees in new workplaces and to activate existing ones as part of an area-wide movement. This campaign and our general agitation also helps the BWFJ to test the climate in various workplaces for organizing around pressing issues.

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**The Workers Fairness Coalition of Wayne and Duplin Counties and the statewide North Carolina Workers Fairness Coalition is very important. We must see the Workers Fairness Coalitions as a united front.**

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The Coalitions must be organizations of workplace, community and unionized worker organizations. It is not simply a framework for bringing together BWFJ initiated organizations and campaigns. The division of responsibilities within the Workers Fairness Coalition must be shared among the various forces making up the coalition. While the BWFJ should be directly represented as an organiza-

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## The Tasks Ahead: Build The BWFJ!



Ashaki Binta, BWFJ Director of Organization

by Ashaki M. Binta

This is an exciting and encouraging period for the Black Workers For Justice as an organization. Many important and historic opportunities lie ahead of us. We must build the BWFJ as a powerful, independent organization of the Black working class which is fighting for workers power and Black liberation.

To accomplish this goal our members must be highly politically conscious and well educated about the problems and issues of the Black working class and the working class in general.....and how to fight against these injustices. We must know our program, goals, and objectives as an organization -- separate from all others.

As members we must be active in the struggles of our workplaces and communities. Our chapters must be tightly and effectively organized and upon this foundation of organization we must recruit, recruit, recruit. As an organization we have to grow. Let's tighten up and then increase our numbers substantially.

### The Workers Want Fairness Campaign And Chapter Building

Our central campaign as an organization is the *Workers Want Fairness Campaign*. Our goal in the Fairness Campaign is to build a broad labor movement in the South which develops "workers self-organization", as Brother Saladin says. This campaign must build new unions and new forms of worker organizations in the South. The Workers Want Fairness Campaign must build broad based Workers Fairness Coalitions across the South, state by state.

Local chapters have a key role to play in building the Workers Want Fairness Campaign. There should be a Workers Want Fairness Coalition and Campaign in every chapter building area. And chapters should be helping to build

state-wide movements around the Fairness Campaign.

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**In North Carolina where the Fairness Campaign has been very successful, members of BWFJ in each Chapter area have been key in building several new worker formations and organizations that have been based in the Workers Fairness Campaign.**

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For example, in Raleigh, members of the Raleigh Chapter built the public service workers union which has now affiliated with the Communications Workers of America (CWA). The Raleigh organization, originally called the Raleigh City Workers Organizing Committee (RCWOC), was the blue print used to form the North Carolina State-wide Public Workers Assembly. The Assembly now has unions or worker organizations in nearly 10 cities and counties across the state. The American Federation Of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), also through BWFJ members, is leading the work of building the movement. It is a Workers Want Fairness Public Workers Unity Movement.

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In Wayne and Duplin Counties, BWFJ members who have now organized the Fremont Chapter of the Black Workers For Justice, have been central in organizing the Workers Fairness Coalition of Wayne and Duplin Counties. BWFJ members also assisted in the building of two workers organizations in the area: a developing in-plant committee at Carolina Turkey and the Duplin Workers For Justice which formed to combat a textile plant closing in their area.

In Wilson, North Carolina members of the Black Workers For Justice and organizers of the Workers Want Fairness Campaign were founding members of the Wilson Labor Council. This is a new labor council, not affiliated with the state AFL-CIO local labor bodies -- *but also not in opposition to them.* The Council formed around uniting the numerous unions in the Wilson area based on a program of strengthening local unions and helping to build new unions and support new organizing drives.

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**The Wilson Labor Council has directly supported the organization of some area nursing home workers at the Avante House and supported two meat packing industry union drives at John Morrell and Lundees. All three campaigns were successful.**

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The United Food And Commercial Workers Union (UFCW) has been the key union involved. And there have been other important efforts and campaigns led by the Wilson Labor Council.

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**In Rocky Mount, North Carolina members of the BWFJ local chapter have been directly involved in the building of a new local labor body composed of workplace committees in unorganized workplaces. This is the Workers Unity Council.**

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The Workers Unity Council has led in the building of more than 10 in-plant committees and shop floor campaigns in the area over the last several years. Over the years, a propaganda or consciousness building campaign has encompassed nearly 30 manufacturing plants in the area. This has largely been based

in consistent distribution of a "Workers Fairness Bulletin" to all of the plants. In-plant committees have remained fairly consistent for several years in a base of 7 plants. Three union campaigns emerged in the area as a result of the Workers Fairness Campaign. One in an auto branch plant, one in a textile plant, and one among city workers which is part of the state public workers movement.

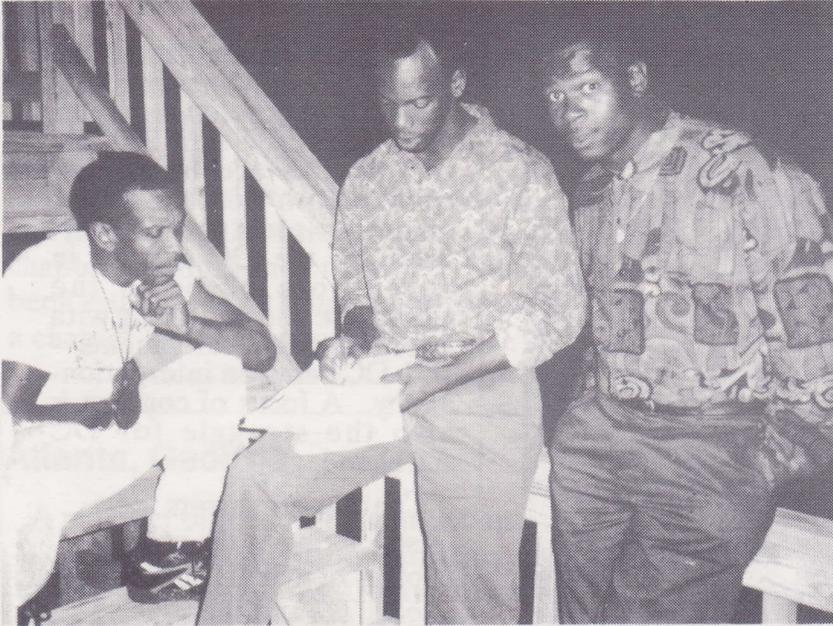
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**Though the traditional union campaigns in the auto and textile plants were not successful in establishing unions, a new union building strategy, which may be key for the South as a whole, has begun to emerge from these experiences.**

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And we are seeing the potential development of an auto sector movement which has great potential in  
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## What's Happening In The Chapter Building Areas?



Members of the Vicksburg Chapter caucusing at JS Retreat

### Vicksburg, Mississippi

A focus of Vicksburg members has been the struggle against the Anderson-Tully wood processing company. Sixteen (16) workers have been fired due the company's random testing drug policy, even though workers are represented by the district Teamsters Union. The grievance procedure of the union has been used to combat the firings but there has not been aggressive representation.

A lot of work has been done by BWFJ members on a wrongful discharge and discrimination suit against Anderson-Tully. Freedom fighter and renowned attorney Chokwe Lumumba of the New African People's Organization (NAPO) is representing workers in the suit.

Vicksburg members are also building a close relationship with the local NAACP where there are dual or overlapping memberships.

Recently, BWFJ members held a meeting with federal government workers in Vicksburg to propose joint campaigns and a closer working relationship. Representatives from Vicksburg also attended the first Justice Speaks retreat held in September this year. As a result, a lot of planning for Justice Speaks distribution has developed. Chapter meetings are still irregular. ■

### Accomplishments, cont.

tion within the Workers Fairness Coalitions, BWFJ leadership in the state committees should come mainly from the base organizations they are members of to represent their concerns. We must expect the decision making process of the Workers Fairness Coalition to be slower than in the BWFJ.

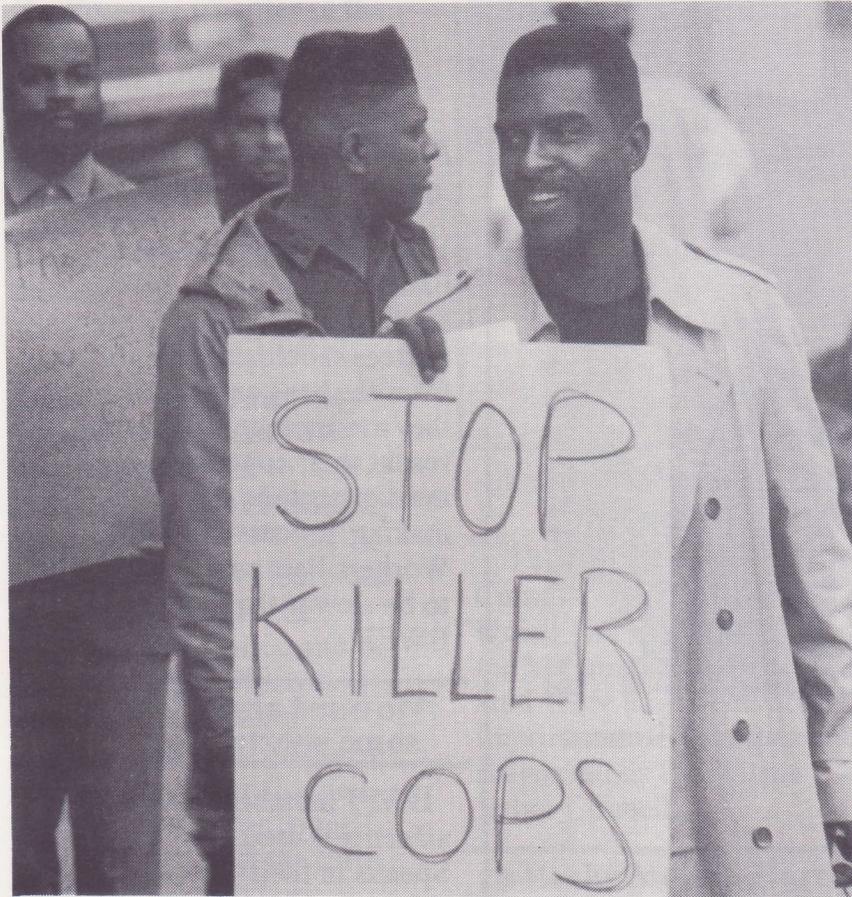
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### We must also address some shortcomings.

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BWFJ members have not affectively used Justice Speaks in their various activities and in educating and recruiting their co-workers. Sales have been low and have threatened the continued publication of Justice Speaks. Membership dues and fundraising has been poor. The organization has been suffering a financial crisis for sometime. Full time staff have been working without income, which is a further indication of their commitment to the BWFJ. All members need to chip in and help out during these rough times. Pledges from members are encouraged. Chapters lack group activities for the membership  
see page 16

## The Chapter Building Areas.....



Members of Raleigh Chapter in police brutality struggle

### Raleigh, North Carolina

In recent months leading up to the November elections, the Raleigh Chapter played a key role in organizing support and votes for Brother Brad Thompson to the Raleigh city council. The Raleigh Chapter organized a powerful motorcade in support of Brad's election and also organized the phone bank for his support. Brad Thompson won District C in the city ward system which primarily represents the Black community!

The chapter, which usually meets the first Sunday afternoon of each month, is preparing for local elections of chapter officers. The chapter is also planning a dinner for it's year end fundraiser.

A leading Raleigh Chapter member traveled to Paris, France this fall for an international conference on the environment. ■

### Washington, DC

The DC Chapter Organizing Committee has been meeting regularly to develop a chapter building plan. Nearly 200 Justice Speaks are being distributed each month. Chapter organizers see a special character for the DC chapter in being both based in the workplace and in dealing with international developments -- with DC being an international city. A focus of concern is also the struggle for DC statehood.

Chapter organizers are also looking at the possibility of a SEIU strike in Local 722 and the issue of lay-offs as a result of the merger between ATT and TCI.

The organizing committee is also discussing the idea of a local radio show on WPFW called the Black Labor Roundtable or such.

Recruitment goals are being set for building the chapter.

Orientation Series 1 thru 3 are being studied.

A D.C. chapter member traveled to Paris, France for an international conference on the effects of privatization globally. ■

**D.C.  
Statehood  
Now !**

## The Chapter Building Areas.....

### Buena Vista, Georgia

The Buena Vista members have mostly concentrated in the RWDSU local contract negotiations with Cargill over the past several months. Organizers feel the negotiations were successful despite some difficulties.

Recently, a worker was scalded with chemicals in the plant and hospitalized. Injuries are an ongoing problem. regular chapter meetings and organizing committee planning have not been established although members are committed to building a chapter hub in the area. ■

### Atlanta, Georgia

A member of the BWFJ from Atlanta attended the July 1993 Workers' School in North Carolina. It was great and inspiring to have a representative from Atlanta present. Chapter organizers, however, have not yet been able to establish a regular organizing committee or chapter building meeting process since the excellent first organizing meeting in May this year.

The May Chapter Organizing meeting established the 1995 Olympics in Atlanta as a major organizing focus for the Atlanta chapter. Members also discussed building support campaigns for Atlanta school bus drivers who need and want to establish a union for their protection. As public workers they have been abused by the city administration. Strong and positive developments have been happening in the Atlanta public transit system, MARTA, where BWFJ has membership. More support work needs to develop around this. An Atlanta member also raised the issue of building support for federal government workers in the Atlanta area who may be facing issues of race and sex discrimination.

Orientation 1 and 2 are being studied. ■



Rocky Mount chapter member on King Holiday

### Rocky Mount, North Carolina

The Rocky Mount Chapter has been meeting regularly though attendance has fluctuated. Justice Speaks sales are beginning to be systematic and consistent again with regular sales efforts being carried out in the Sharpsburg area along with other targeted sales efforts. The Chapter has started a local newsletter for regular distribution to the membership and as one aspect of better activating and mobilizing the members.

Members of the Rocky Mount Chapter were active in support for the victorious town council election in Whitakers, North Carolina. Members especially put in time on election day to support the "get-out-the-vote" effort. Rocky Mount members have also

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## The Chapter Building Areas.....

### Rocky Mount, cont.

been active in the Workers Unity Network, attending it's general membership meeting held in Washington, DC this month. Last month, Rocky Mount Chapter members also attended the National Network On Cuba meeting in D.C.

This year, members of the Rocky Mount Chapter traveled to Mexico for TIE Auto Workers Conference.

A committee of the Rocky Mount Chapter, along with the Fruit Of Labor Singing Ensemble is organizing a Benefit Concert And Talent Show in December for the BWFJ national organization and for local displaced labor leaders as a contribution to their upcoming holidays.

The Chapter, as a member of the Workers Unity Council which it helped to organize in 1989, is conducting a "Martin Luther King Paid Holiday" Campaign which has conducted a massive leafletting drive and has targeted a petition campaign for the holiday to about 12 plants, leading up to the January 1994 King Holiday. ■

**Organize  
The  
South!**

### Fremont, North Carolina

Consistent organizing committee and regular chapter meetings have been established in Fremont. The chapter organizing committee is taking up issues in relation to it's main organizing focus, Carolina Turkey. The Fremont Chapter is a member of the Workers Fairness Coalition which has mainly been organized around support for the Carolina Turkey workers. A worker was killed at Carolina Turkey in October.

Justice Speaks distribution has been mainly conducted through each member getting their 10 copies although several conferences have been targeted with a BWFJ sales table which has presented Justice Speaks for sales.

The Fremont Chapter Organizing Committee has also been involved in meetings with the LaGrange, North Carolina Black Alliance. The Alliance is facing a tough struggle against the powerlessness of the Black community and discrimination in the local police department and in city government.

Members of the Fremont Chapter Organizing Committee were key participants in the recent North Carolina Fair Share Conference in Raleigh. Fremont members also traveled to Washington, DC for the National Network On Cuba Conference last month. A Fremont Chapter organizer was also a featured Speaker at the Hamlet Response Coalition Conference in Greensboro this month.

This past summer, members of the Fremont Chapter and the Workers Fairness Coalition traveled to Cuba.

Orientations 1 thru 4 are being studied. ■

### National Fundraiser

All chapter areas and organizing committees have taken on ticket sales for BWFJ's national fundraising raffle. Sales of a minimum of 100 tickets per chapter building area have been targeted. Thanks to everyone for their participation. The drawing will be in early December so please keep up the ticket sales through the end of November. More tickets can be ordered from national headquarters in Rocky Mount. Call 919-977-8162 for more tickets or any questions. Thanks again! ■

# Justice Speaks: Our Weapon In The Struggle !

by Shafeah M'Balía

The Justice Speaks planning retreat in September this year was a great success and resulted in several important resolutions to improve upon the writing, sales, distribution, and production of the Speaks.

Representatives from the Raleigh, Rocky Mount, Washington, DC, and Vicksburg chapters were in attendance at the retreat as well as the Justice Speaks editorial and production staff.

Guests and allies were present from the *People's Tribune* which was also very important. The resolutions coming out of the Justice Speaks Retreat were as follows:



Walter Johnson, National Distribution Coor. for JS

## Worker Participation In The Paper

### Resolved:

1. More editorial staff is needed to help workers get their ideas onto paper. More direct interviews of workers will become a feature of the paper.

2. The growth of shop papers, newsletters, and flyers has greatly helped build worker's confidence and break down the intimidating, so-called "mystery" of producing the paper.

The staff will more aggressively be involved in helping workplace committees, organizing committees, writers, and chapters in writing, layout, production, and basic computer skills (as we are technically able). We will also work to increase staff skills.

3. Local Justice Speaks Coordinators should play a broader role than simply distributing papers and collecting money (as important as that task is). They should help identify potential writers, help workers get help writing their story, coordinating with staff, if necessary. They should lead or help lead discussions of the chapter or organizing committee in criti-



Shafeah M'Balía, Editor of Justice Speaks

quing the paper and studying articles.

## Distribution

### Resolved:

1. Walter Johnson agreed to accept the responsibility of National Distribution Coordinator to aggressively assist in getting Justice Speaks out to the local areas in a timely manner. *(The objective is to get the paper on it's distribution routes by the Monday following the printing of the paper).* The National Distribution Coordinator will help to coordinate distribution at national or special events; assist local coordinators with distribution problems; help coordinate national subscription drives.

2. Vicksburg, Mississippi organizing committee committed to distribute 150 papers monthly. (page 19)

## Women's Commission Report

by Rukiya Dillahunt

At the BWFJ 1992 Retreat the Women's Commission (WC) put forward a plan to establish a BWFJ women's department and local women's coordinators at the chapter level.

Selecting a Women's Department Coordinator has enabled the Women's Commission to move rapidly in following through with its plans and studying the various issues affecting the development of women as leaders, too. The Women's Department and Women's Commission coordinators work together in implementing the internal and external program of action for the Women's Commission as well as developing and educating women in the local chapters.

Establishing a regular column, "Ain't I A Woman" in Justice Speaks is a major accomplishment for the Women's Commission (see JS Sept., Oct., and Nov. issues).

At our August meeting members of the commission selected the month they would be responsible for writing the column. The WC will discuss issues/topics several months in advance allowing adequate preparation time. Although the column is titled "Ain't I A Woman", the commission decided to



Rukiya Dillahunt, National Women's Coordinator

have a contest in selecting a title for the column. Have any suggestions?

The Justice Speaks editor has received two articles from readers indicating their concern about Rap music and the oppression and abuse of women throughout the music industry as well as the videos. These papers were submitted as a response to the regular column. The Women's Department

Coordinator will distribute copies of the papers to local chapters for discussion. The response of the discussion from the local chapters will be summed up by the WC and WD and then published in Justice Speaks.

Another highlight in the WC's work has been our participation in the Worker's School. The 1992 Worker's School was the first time the commission led a workshop dealing with the oppression of women. Then, at the July 1993 Workers's School, members of the WC facilitated several workshops. The workshop, "Women Workers Are Leaders, Too!", generated a lively discussion on male supremacy and the oppression of women as it relates to women's participation in workshops. This included  
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International Working Women's Day, an annual event

# Trade Union Commission Report

by Nat Blandon

The Trade Union Commission (TUC) has been historically used as an advisory body to the work of the BWFJ. Note its work with Rocky Mount Undergarment and the Raleigh City Workers.

The TUC also helped to prepare the BWFJ position on privatization for its presentation and participation in the International Conference on Privatization in Paris, France this year.

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**Basically, the TUC's tasks have been defined by the needs of the struggles in the South. This is crucial to defining the parameters of its work.**

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We should look at some proposals to strengthen

### Women's Com., cont.

women who were very active in their trade unions as well as women who are active in their local community struggles.

The Women's Commission continues to meet on a regular basis, 3 - 4 times a year. At the WC's October meeting members agreed to expand the membership of the Commission. We will be submitting names to the NSC at the retreat. The WC has adopted the Trade Union Commission's model

TUC work over the next year:

1. The TUC needs someone responsible for its work in the South. More southern than D.C. This I think will provide the spark and accountability to make sure it meets regularly and to address the problems arising from the Southern work in a timely manner.

Work in poultry, in auto, the housekeepers, etc. and now the electoral struggle needs to be addressed from the perspective of the TUC.

Other areas should be identified where the TUC can help and TUC people allocated or requested to help with such work.

2. One idea might be to have co-chairs with one person responsible for identifying the needs of the

for expanding the Commission's membership.

The Women's Commission has some exciting plans for our Program of Action for the next year as will be laid out at the 93 Retreat. The WC will continue to lead the organization in education, identification, understanding and rectifying the oppression of women. This would not be possible without the direction, support, and guidance of the organization. ■

southernization of the Workers Fairness Campaign and the other for soliciting help and assistance from TUC members inside and outside the South.

3. The NSC still needs to identify who it feels should be asked to be TUC members.

4. All TUC members should be made aware that they will from time to time be called upon to assist in campaigns with their resources, knowledge and experience.

5. Each BWFJ chapter should have someone as TUC liason, who would be responsible for bringing up issues it feels the TUC should address. ■

**Women  
Workers  
Are  
Leaders,  
Too!**

## An Update From "The Fruit Of Labor"



The Fruit Of Labor Singing Ensemble, 1991

by *Nathanette Mayo*

During 1993 the Fruit of Labor Singing Ensemble has "qualitatively" grown tremendously. The development of songs (meaning and issues addressed) has greatly deepened.

The size of the ensemble has also grown. An additional singer was added along with two percussionists and, at times, a bass player.

We have worked hard to expand the "styles" of the music we create. Our goal is to try to at least tap all the various styles of African-American music -- blues, r&b, jazz, rap, hip hop, gospel and acapella.

We are currently working on moving into the international realm and creat-

ing, to begin with, at least one, possibly more songs in Spanish. We feel that this would certainly help promote the solidarity that is shared between workers from the South and Mexican and Latino workers, especially when southern workers go on tours to Mexico, the western U.S. and southwestern U.S.

We have participated in various rallies and programs (i.e. Walnut Terrace, 1194 dinners, BWFJ banquet, etc.) in the Raleigh/Durham area.

We also performed with a jazz combo in Asheville at the Asheville/Buncombe public workers picnic and candidates forum. This was a very good experience and we were able to make some valuable contacts which will help us with our future

recording of a CD and/or cassette.

We have not had any major or minor, for that matter, performances in the eastern part of the state. The circumstances have changed, though. It is not from an unwillingness to travel but more so the ability to arrange individual schedules to be able to get to an activity. (*This is also true with regards to getting everyone to practices.*)

We are, though, planning to do a major concert/fundraiser in the eastern part of the state -- Rocky Mount -- for the national organization. Members have committed the 2nd Saturday in December for this event.

We have not raised many funds for our own development or to give to the organization or to contribute to any campaigns this year. We do, however, have an upcoming paying engagement with Grassroots Leadership on December 10th.

Organizationally, we desperately need a manager to help with publicizing the Fruit, keep an eye open for the solicit paying engagements, help with fundraising, coordinating engagements and recordings, sending out cor-

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## The Tasks Ahead, cont.

solving the union building problem. Currently an attempt to organize new in-plant committees and to revitalize old committees, some of which have been having it rough from the union campaigns, is being organized through a "*Martin Luther King Paid Holiday*" Campaign.

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**Though there have been many ups and downs, strengths and weaknesses, and uneven developments in the various Workers Want Fairness movements and campaigns, BWFJ as a whole has been learning and gaining a tremendous amount of experience.**

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Indeed, the Workers Want Fairness Campaign has been bearing fruit and bringing about concrete results. This can be replicated across the South with the help and concerted effort of local chapters building the Fairness Campaign wherever they exist.

### Recognizing Our Strengths

One of the important features of our development over the years is that we are rooted in key workplaces and industries throughout the South.

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**In studying the base of our membership and the activities and focus of our members in the chapter**

**building areas, we can readily see that we are firmly located in the public sector, timber and wood processing, public transit, hospital care, and various manufacturing sectors including food processing, garment and textiles, and the auto branch plants -- as well as other manufacturing sectors. This strength reflects both the basis of our membership and also the influence and concentration of our members in the various struggles of the working class.**

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It is also important to sum up that our members are based in and/or have worked with several international unions. These include the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), the American Postal Workers Union (APWU), the Communications Workers of America (CWA), Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the TEAMSTERS, Atlanta MARTA, the Retail, Wholesale, And Department Store Union (RWDSU), the National Association of Educators (NEA), the United Electrical Workers (UE), and we have worked closely with the United Food And Commercial Workers Union (UFCW), the United Auto

Workers (UAW), the International Ladies And Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), and the Amalgamated Clothing And Textile Workers Union (ACTWU), in various campaigns.

Though the work and relationships with the unions have not been easy -- and the unions themselves present many weaknesses and difficult problems -- we continue to gain valuable experience and demonstrate the understanding of the Black working class about the importance of building unions to our overall liberation struggle.

### Combating Our Weaknesses

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**Despite the many strengths we are exhibiting as an organization, our weaknesses still tend to undermine our full capacity and effectiveness. It is essential for us to strive to combat and where possible eliminate our short comings.**

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Building a powerful mass organization of revolutionary and working class character is a long term process. We know this. However, by maintaining a minimum level of organizational

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## **Accomplishments, cont.**

aside from the monthly meetings. A group selling of JS at a targetted community and a regular forum organized by the Chapters would create the basis for more group discussion at the Chapter meetings. They would also enable members to recruit co-workers and friends to BWFJ activities. We must do more in the area of building coalitions at all levels with other organizations around common issues.

We must maintain communications and dialogue with other activist groups in the areas to assess various developments.

The BWFJ National Steering Committee (NSC) has been overloaded. Leadership must be developed from the chapters and cadre at-large to take on some of the general work. This requires that BWFJ members become more intimately familiar with the BWFJ Program, "Where We Stand", and also our strategy. New organizational bodies must be developed that involve the more active and committed members in major areas of work.

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**The Commissions of the NSC must prepare reports and proposals that enable the NSC to make well thought out**

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**decisions. The struggles and issues we face are becoming more complex and require more research, discussion and education in preparation for effective decision making.**

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We must do better on the question of building and maintaining relations with allies. Long term support is based on mutual solidarity. Yes, we must have priorities; and no, we cannot be involved in everything. But we must identify, plan for, and be involved in activities with our allies as part of our important political obligations.

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**There are key conferences, meetings and demonstrations at which BWFJ should be represented.**

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Someone must be in charge of finding people to attend these activities and helping to prepare them to participate. We should also make apologies for not being able to attend, and send messages of support.

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**Our absence is also a missed opportunity to include the Southern perspective which is often missing.**

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Overall, we should be proud of our accomplishments this year.■

## **Fruit, cont.**

response and just making contacts/developing a Fruit network. A goal for this upcoming year is to write grant proposals to begin getting funds for the Fruit to develop and promote our unique kind of music. We could also begin to expand by helping other cultural workers to create their own "Fruits" to help popularize their struggles. I believe that this goal can be achieved and I will personally work to accomplish it.■

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## **Workers' School, cont.**

will be available soon. It will be devoted to Redistricting and African American Political Power. Chapters will be asked to use it in their education sessions at monthly meetings. Future Education Bulletin topics will include "NAFTA", "Independent Political Action" and "Building Good Relationships Between Men and Women in Our Organizations".

Chapters that have specific training or educational needs in addition to current programs should contact the Education Coordinator.■

## The National BWFJ "Organize The South" Solidarity Movement

One of the critically important developments over the last several years has been the solidarity movement that has emerged around the country.

The movement was consciously organized by BWFJ members Saladin Muhammad and Teresa El-Amin. It began with a national tour of southern workers to the mid-west in July 1990. A broad delegation of BWFJ members and southern workers visited 5 cities in the mid-west including Cleveland, Ohio; Detroit, Michigan; Pittsburgh and Erie, Pennsylvania; and Chicago, Illinois.

On the heels of the Midwest Tour, a North Carolina textile worker, Mrs. Ina Mae Best, who had participated in the tour was fired on trumped up charges. Sister Ina, as she is affectionately called, worked for 18 years with an



BWFJ members and supporters visiting from Rhode Island

excellent work record at Goldtex in Goldsboro, North Carolina. Her support, leadership, and strong stand for the union drive led by the workers and ACTWU made her the object of attack along with several other workers who were part of the campaign leadership.

The struggle against her unjust firing led to a national solidarity campaign in her support which helped to nationalize the issue of organizing the South and the problems and issues faced by southern workers in their efforts to organize in a hostile southern political and economic climate.

Her struggle became the national "Rehire Ina Mae Best" Campaign. The campaign provided new support activity for solidarity allies in the Midwest and helped to focus and develop the second "solidarity tour" to the northeast, raising several thousand dollars directly for Sister Ina and to finance BWFJ's support  
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## Tasks Ahead, cont.

standards, we can increase our power and progress substantially and see the results.

Monthly chapter meetings and an active membership is very important. We will not understand ourselves as an organization and fight effectively for our interests if we do not meet and if members do not involve themselves in the campaigns and work of the chapters. The regularity and activities of our chapters and meetings must increase.

A strong leadership core in the form of active steering committees will make a big difference if it meets, plans, and directs the activities of the organization by calling upon chapter members to take responsibilities and carry out work. Every chapter building area should have an active organizing or steering committee.

Sales and distribution of Justice Speaks, both by individual members and as an organization is still not well coordinated and planned. Members and

## Solidarity, cont.

and coordination of the Ina Mae Best Campaign, along the way.

The Northeast BWFJ "Organize The South" Solidarity Tour took a delegation of southern workers, including Sister Ina, to six northeastern cities. They were Philadelphia, Pa.; Boston, Mass;

chapters have to get the Speaks out! This may take a member and/or a committee to be responsible for Speaks activities.

Payment and collection of dues is one of our most difficult problems.

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**No organization such as the Black Workers For Justice can hope to challenge the corporations, the political system, and all of the vestiges of injustices we face every day if we are not primarily dependant upon our own resources as our first line of development, self-sufficiency, and self-determination.**

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If we believe in ourselves and our organization, then the attitude of the members must be to pay our dues so that we have an organization that can function at all levels.

It may be necessary to place one member, such as the chapter organizer or another designated member to actually seek out and collect dues from the members.

This is beyond the duties of the treasurer to keep ac-

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Jersey City, NJ; New York, NY; Providence, RI; and Washington, DC. Our strongest BWFJ solidarity committee still exists and functions consistently in Providence, Rhode Island.

Following the Northeast Tour and the national movement around support of Ina Mae Best, the tragedy of 25 deaths in Hamlet, North Carolina occurred. This was September 1991.

curate records of dues payments (which we must have as a determination of members in good standing and eventually those eligible to vote on issues confronting the organization). But the chapter organizer would actually seek out monthly dues contributions from the membership.

And last, but definitely not least, is the fact of on-going internal education.

A highly developed political consciousness is critical for the BWFJ membership. Each month, certainly at chapter meetings, but in between meetings as well, members should be studying Justice Speaks. Each member should have a complete set of BWFJ Orientations, pamphlets, and the BWFJ Constitution. The Education Department will have to increase and regularize it's internal education bulletin for the membership. But continuous study should be a part of our organizational culture.

So, with all of this in mind, KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK! ■

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**BWFJ**, in support of the workers of Imperial Foods and the victims families in Hamlet, developed a national campaign to bring justice to that devastated community and to expose the true nature of the working conditions faced by southern workers.

"The Justice For Hamlet/Organize The South" Campaign helped to build a local, state, and

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# Update On The Political Power Movement

## Keysville, Ga.

The Keysville community, which is affiliated with the BWFJ, will be conducting an official swearing in ceremony on Sunday, November 28th for town officials, Mayor Emma Gresham, and Councilwomen Ollie Mae Lane and Mary Holland. They will have 4 year terms. □

## Fremont, NC

BWFJ member and Councilman Billy Harvey says the city council has just received a community block grant to renovate housing starting in 1994. A struggle is underway to gain a 50% portion of all local contracting for the Black community. □

## Solidarity, cont.

National movement around Hamlet. The national campaign itself became a more advanced organize the South solidarity movement. Solidarity took the form of a massive march of nearly 4,000 on Hamlet in May 1992 and raised more than \$50,000 for the workers and victims families in the Imperial Foods Victim Relief Fund. Another \$8,000 was raised to finance the organization of the march.

The West Coast Tour also became tied to Hamlet but also carried on the national support movement for Ina Mae Best and tied in solidarity efforts to the Rocky Mount Schlage Lock Anti-plant Closing movement from 1988.

The West Coast Tour took representatives from the Black Workers For Justice, the Schlage Workers For Justice, a former Imperial Foods worker, and Sister Ina Mae Best to 10 cities on the West Coast and to Mexico.

The solidarity work has continued to develop and presents op-

## Shiloh, NC

BWFJ members in Shiloh helped the community to conduct a candidate screening for the November election. Candidates were forced to respond. The November 20th health clinic will conduct mamography screenings. □

## Whitakers, NC

The newly elected majority Black city council is protesting the unjust firing of the towns' Black police chief, before the few officials have even been sworn into office. BWFJ members are helping to organize the struggle. □

portunities to build critical support for southern struggles and movements as they emerge.

While Providence, Rhode Island has remained the most organized and developed solidarity committee, the potential for other areas to develop remains an important possibility.

Another organizing effort which has a direct component for building solidarity with Black Workers For Justice and the organize the South work is emerging in the form of the Workers Unity Network.

The Workers Unity Network (WUN), formed in May this year is a component of the national movement to build an independent working class political party and movement in the US which represents the needs and interests of working people. The WUN ties this motion to the central question of organizing the South, support for Black liberation, and an independent working class political action -- including a clean and total break with the Democratic Party which does not

## Justice Speaks, cont.

3. Subscription Drive January 15 through April 4. Results to be announced at the MLK Banquet. Goal: 1,000 subscriptions celebrating "Ten Years of Breaking the Information Blockade Against the South".

## Production & Administration

### Resolved:

1. Develop plan to submit to NSC for Advertising and Advertising Coordinator; shoot for November '93 Retreat

2. Special Projects Coordinator: There are a number of short

term projects or longer term work which needs to be started such as specific fundraising projects; the advertising proposal and identifying an advertising coordinator; training targeted workers to handle more of the administrative/office duties and training targeted workers to take over some of the editorial and production coordination work.

3. Establishing an office coordinator.

4. Bind Justice Speaks issues of the last 5 years into book for presentation.

5. Investigate archiving of photographs. ■

represent or protect the interests of organized labor or working people in general.

In May, the WUN took up direct solidarity action in support of the Standard Products workers in Rocky Mount. Standard workers, led by members of the BWFJ who work at Standard in Rocky Mount, formed an independent, non-majority union without a contract after loosing an NLRB election with the United Auto Workers in April this year. Their formation of the United Workers Of Standard Products (UWSP) has developed the Network's sup-

port in it's struggle to combat the firings of it's key members and leaders. Solidarity has included a small petition drive targeted both the unionized Standard plants across the country and general petitions to supporters around the country.

In October, a Cleveland Committee of the WUN leafletted a Standard Products Board of Directors meeting at it's Cleveland Headquarters. The WUN Committee also made contact with the local union representing Standard workers in Cleveland about the UWSP struggle and also conducted a small fundraiser which went directly to the UWSP in Rocky Mount.

Though much more work needs to be done in relation to building and strengthening the Organize

The South Solidarity movement, BWFJ members and chapter building areas should see this movement and work as an important component of our overall strategy -- built by the BWFJ and it's many supporters.

More of our struggles in the local base areas must seek to utilize the solidarity movement work to better build and nationalize or atleast broaden their local campaigns.

More development and coordination needs to be done, so at the present, local chapter building areas and key Workers Want Fairness Campaigns should contact national headquarters for joint consultation and planning with the various leaders, activists, and supporters of the solidarity movements. ■

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