

CONVENTION RESOLUTION: WORKING WOMEN, CLUW, AND IS WORK  
Women's Commission

Introduction

The intent of this resolution is to deepen our analysis and flesh out our strategy toward building a working women's movement. Although it will focus on CLUW today, because concretely that is our main activity vis-a-vis women workers, it will attempt to put CLUW into our overall analysis of labor and our perspectives generally. It is not a resolution aimed at concretely telling our fractions what to do tactically in CLUW on a day to day basis. The purpose rather is to spell out our overall perspectives and strategy so that we are better able to decide upon various tactics in our work.

The context for ~~an~~ our analysis of women workers today has its roots in three developments in the 60's: the large influx of women as a permanent part of the workforce, the importance of the women's movement in popularizing the ideas of women's equality in the working class, and the developing ~~crisis~~ crisis in capitalism that is the material basis for our general perspectives.

Between 1962 and 1970 over one million women joined unions representing a huge increase ~~in~~ of women in the labor movement. Today, women are close to 40% of the workforce. The main reason for this dramatic change is to be found in the ~~an~~ increasing pressure ~~on~~ on working class living standards brought about by the developing crisis in capitalism. Inflation, recession, rising taxes, mean that it is increasingly difficult for workers' families to live on one income. The majority of women workers today are married, and almost 1/2 have children. In addition to the unions that have historically had a majority of women (CWA, ACWA, ILGWU, IBEW) women have dramatically increased primarily in government and service unions (AFSCME, AFT, AFGE, SEIU) and to a lesser extent in other unions (UAW, IAM, and railway clerks).

It is these women, who are not working temporarily until they get married, and ~~who~~ have children, but who must work, that are the potential ~~a~~ base and pressure for building a working women's movement and today the base for formations like CLUW.

Secondly, the women's movement of the late 60's had a large impact on women workers. In fact, it was partially the large influx of women into industry that materially laid the base for this movement, even though it was actually divorced from the working class. Nevertheless it did serve to popularize the ideas of women's liberation - especially ~~the~~ equality of work and pay on the job to women who worked. This affected not only rank and file women workers, but also the few women labor leaders and is important in laying the ideological basis for formations and organizations among working women.

Thirdly, the backdrop to all of this is the developing crisis in the capitalist system. It was and is the increasing inflation with periodic recessions that brought large numbers of women into industry, and that is beginning to force them into militant activity and self organization. Our analysis, that this crisis will continue to deepen, is the material basis for our general perspectives of helping to build a rank and file movement and the revolutionary party, and specifically also to building a working women's movement. Today, these three factors have come together and have begun to lay the basis for women organizing inside the trade unions and working class in general.

### Developments among women labor leaders

Women bureaucrats, like all women workers have been discriminated against because of their sex within the bureaucracy. So, while they achieved their positions primarily because they were tough aggressive women, their ambitions have been constantly thwarted by sexism. The combination of the ideas of the women's movement and the potential base ~~for~~ of large numbers of women workers, have made it possible for them to begin to organize - in an attempt to use this potential base as a pressure against the male dominated trade union leadership. Women bureaucrats have organized bureaucratic women's caucuses (CWA), women's departments and committees (UAW, AFT, ACWA), and have held women's conferences (UAW, CWA, IUE, AFT, Newspaper Guild, and assorted state federations). These developments predate CLUW, but are part of the same dynamic that has thrust these top level bureaucrats into activity.

But these ~~bureaucratic~~ bureaucratic formations were not enough - the women labor leaders needed something more. And it is here that CLUW fits in. The central idea behind CLUW was to form an organization of women union members, which these women could use to pressure the bureaucracy and advance themselves. But their ~~the~~ image of CLUW is only that - a pressure, lobbying organization, since politically and programatically they are tied to the bureaucracy and its interests.

### Dynamic of CLUW

CLUW represents a dynamic that goes far beyond the women bureaucrats' needs. It is a dynamic that also potentially outstrips CLUW itself. As we are aware, the founding conference attracted far more women than the bureaucracy wanted or needed. And CLUW is and will play a role of bringing rank and file women into activity whether or not is it through CLUW. This dynamic will grow rapidly as workers in general are pushed into activity by the developing economic pressures. For women workers, these pressures will also mean that they will be forced to fight sexism in the unions. The demands around equality in the workforce (equal pay for equal work, maternity benefits, child care, upgrades) as well as the question of organizing the unorganized with only 12% of ~~women~~ women workers in unions, will become key as women workers are forced to fight just to maintain their living standards. CLUW is significant precisely because it concretizes this dynamic today and provides an organization expression which we can intervene in with our perspectives.

Thus the potential that CLUW represents is enormous. As a model, it could open up the possibility of other fighting groups inside the trade unions. ~~And~~ And it represents a potential split inside the bureaucracy over the question of women's rights. And while the leadership of CLUW today represents a roadblock and is quite conservative, the tendency will be for this dynamic to outstrip this leadership as the economic crisis develops.

### The bureaucracy and CLUW

As stated above the top level bureaucrats formed ~~the~~ CLUW and will attempt to use it as a pressure group for their own advancement as women leaders inside the trade union movement. They have no basic programmatic differences with the male dominated bureaucracy except on the question of women. The answer they give to the problems of women

workers face is having more women bureaucrats to replace the male bureaucrats. They see themselves politically as agents of their own international union and responsible to that international. Their first allegiance is to the bureaucracy.

Thus these women are not interested in building the struggles of working women, because they politically understand the threat that such self activity and the heightened consciousness that follows from that represents to their position as bureaucratic leaders. Their strategy then is based upon pressuring the Democratic Party through COPE (AFL-CIO), CAP (UAW), using the courts, affirmative action programs, the EEOC and other government agencies, essentially acting as brokers for the rank and file in order to benefit themselves. They do not want CIUW to grow, be involved in activity, etc., they only wish to maintain it. For them, its existence is enough.

Because of this strategy, they will attempt in each and every way to close out the rank and file and radicals from participation because of the threat this represents to their perspective for CLUW. We have seen that clearly over the past 5 months. Olga Madar (UAW) said at the first Detroit CLUW meeting that CLUW was to be a place where women union members could discuss things and then take them back to their unions for action; CLUW was not to be the focus of ~~that~~ that action. These women have successfully stalled the development of local CLUWs in most places by stating that there can not be an official local CLUW until there have been three local meetings, and that those already held don't count because the official national membership cards have not been sent out yet so there are no official members of CLUW yet.

There is a difference, however, between the top level bureaucrats and the secondary leaders and staffers. While those at the top have a clear political orientation and program for CLUW, the secondary leaders and staffers are generally confused and caught in a contradictory position. They are not at all clear about what is expected of them. On the one hand they want women's rights and are for a women's rights program, and on the other hand they generally support the bureaucracy. Sociologically this grouping is most like the middle class women who are the base of NOW. They are women who are moving up, and want additional levers for doing that, hence they are much more willing to rock the boat. It is ~~this~~ this group that most aspires to increasing the number of women in the leadership. To a greater or lesser degree they accept the bureaucratic strategy for achieving this demand.

This grouping in CLUW is actually a spectrum beginning with full time staffers who are more closely linked with the bureaucracy, through secondary leaders and others less closely linked. While to a greater or lesser degree they politically support the bureaucracy, they are ~~also~~ can be interested in the struggles of ~~with~~ working women on an issue by issue basis. On specific question, some will be willing to participate in and or lead militant struggles. They do not understand the contradiction between their support of their struggles and their support for the bureaucracy.

#### Rank and file women

At this time the number of rank and file women workers actually involved in CLUW is relatively small. This is both because their consciousness on the ~~is~~ need for an organization

tends to be lower, and also because the tactics of the CLUW leadership discourages rank and file participation. But, through small, it is ~~this~~ this group which is most important, because ~~if~~ if organized it represents the only potential counter politically to the bureaucracy. And, given the dynamic discussed above, it is possible that numbers of rank and file women could be brought into CLUW if there was an alternative strategy to the bureaucracy that they could see as a ~~real~~ real possibility. Their consciousness is also contradictory however. While they are turned off many times to the undemocratic and heavy handed tactics ~~of~~ of the bureaucracy, they tend to respect these women for what they've achieved - and without a reasonable alternative, those involved will tend to support the bureaucracy politically on all but the clearest issues such as support for the UFW.

### The left

The left so far has played a very mixed role in CLUW. By and large the sects have tended to support or even be the hatched women for the bureaucracy (SWP, OL, CP, SP) or to be totally sectarian toward CLUW (SL, RU). The ~~the~~ SWP, OL, CP, SP have carved out roles for themselves as the joiner partners to the bureaucracy, always siding with them against other leftists and rank and filers who attempt to put forward alternative strategies to that of the ~~bureaucracy~~ bureaucracy. Through this left bureaucratic strategy, they hope to carve out for themselves a posit on of power, by getting into positions of leadership through supporting the bureaucracy with ~~left~~ left rhetoric.

The SL and the RU with its recent left turn, on the other hand, play a super sectarian role, posing little or nothing that is actionable or concrete, and simply attacking the bureaucracy. Especially the SL tends to disenchant rank and filers and others who might be moved to support an alternative strategy. with the organized left, by coloring all leftists as sectarian, ultra left radicals who are only interested in building their own groups.

Aside from ourselves, the other grouping is the independent industrialized radicals, who are influenced by the Maoist milieu, but who are open to a realistic perspective in CLUW. These women tend to be serious about building a rank and file oriented working women's organization, but have no worked out strategy for doing that. Many of ~~these~~ them have been or are in the hundreds of ~~working~~ working class collectives that are now breaking up under the pressure of political sorting out in the left. This grouping together with the small number of rank and filers are the potential base in CLUW for an alternative strategy ~~and~~ perspective to the bureaucratic pressure group one. It will be our ability to work with and win these groupings to our ~~own~~ perspectives that will enable us to play a role in CLUW ~~and~~ beyond in the tasks of building a working women's movement.

### IS work

Our overall strategy vis-a-vis women workers and CLUW in particular flows from our general perspectives - of building a rank and file movement out of the rank and file rebellion that will grow as a result of the economic pressures and general crisis of capitalism. Moreover it will be through this general strategy applied to women workers and CLUW that we will win women workers to the IS and to the concept of building a revolutionary workers party, and thus make possible a unified revolutionary organization that can play the role

of leading the women's movement in general and women workers in particular to a ~~successful~~ successful socialist revolution.

Equally important, winning women worker leaders to the IS and the need to build a revolutionary party will aid in the process of developing women in general in the IS to a position of full equality.

The task in this resolution based upon the above analysis ~~x~~ is to concretize our general perspectives and strategy for CLUW and the dynamic today among women trade union ~~rank~~ members. Our national fraction has been attempting to implement the following strategy: to have all of our trade union women actively involved in local CLUW ~~chap~~ chapters, pushing an orientation toward a national campaign to organize the unorganized and to take advantage of local issues and struggles around equality in the work force which have the potential of ~~building~~ building CLUW from a rank and file perspective. However, we have found that due primarily to the stalling tactics of the bureaucracy, that the ~~rank~~ campaign for organizing the unorganized was ahead of time ~~x~~ since there are still no official local CLUW ~~chap~~ chapters and probably will not be until the middle or late fall. What we have been primarily involved in doing is attempting to fight the bureaucratic attempts to thwart the development of CLUW, by finding ways around ~~getting~~ the bureaucratic strategy of no activity. ~~Will~~ we will probably have to continue to do this for the next period of time. Our biggest difficulty will be in keeping those rank and filers and industrialized radicals from becoming totally ~~x~~ cynical about CLUW and the ~~poss~~ possibility of fighting the bureaucracy. But because of the potential of CLUW and the dynamic it ~~repres~~ represents, we must continue to make this fight, because we understand that our ability to build CLUW will affect consciousness far beyond CLUW and will be part of the process of building a working women's movement, no matter what eventually happens with CLUW itself.

Thus, our general strategy ~~w~~ toward CLUW is to fight for it to become an effective organization of struggle on behalf of working women. To do this, ~~we~~ we will ~~at~~ eventually have to build a national opposition to the bureaucracy based upon militant struggles around women's equality in the work force and organizing the unorganized, which we believe will increase as the crisis in capitalism deepens. This ~~a~~ opposition based upon actual fights and mass action of working women is counterposed to the ~~bureaucratic~~ bureaucratic lobbying strategy discussed earlier.

In opposition to the bureaucrats conception that CLUW not do anything in its own name, that it be a place for discussion among women union members where they get ideas to take back to their unions, we put forward the perspective that CLUW must initiate, involve itself and help to build the struggles of working women, including those few that are taking place today. Our conception is ~~ix~~ to use CLUW to initiate, support and build the fights that increase the consciousness and self activity of women workers as women and as workers. The issues are those of ~~a~~ equal pay for equal work, up grades, child care, maternity, and organizing the unorganized. In putting forward this conception, the tactics and ideas that we argue for are those that build on the ~~confid~~ confidence and self activity of women workers, not those of the bureaucracy that say in effect, let the politicians, the courts, the government agencies, or the bureaucracy do it for you. The question of the form of the struggle is as important to us as the struggle itself, because only by women workers organizing and carrying out

these fights themselves in massive and militant actions will their consciousness be increased and moved in the direction of revolutionary consciousness.

We use every opportunity concretely to raise this program for CLUW by attempting today to bring the few fights going on into CLUW such as the nurses strike in the SF Bay Area, and the ~~USA~~ UFW struggle nationally.

In this context we politically support the aspirations of women for more women leaders in the unions. The question is, what kind of leaders and what orientation do they have. Militant working women in the leadership of unions will serve to increase the consciousness of working women, and aid in the building of a working women's movement. But they can only do that as the leaders of militant women's fights in the unions, and not through lobbying politicians and the male trade union leaders. What we oppose is not the demand for more women in the leadership of the unions, but the strategy and the program that the women bureaucrats have for achieving this, and their conception of the political role of these leaders.

Our strategy then, involves counterposing an active struggle conception of CLUW to the bureaucrats pressure group lobbying and legislative conception. For us, CLUW is not just a discussion group, but a fighting ~~or~~ organization. In order to implement this strategy we orient to the few rank and file women involved who are willing to fight. It is this orientation, and our ability to actually work with rank and file women that has enabled us to work closely with a number of the independent industrialized radicals, and to begin to win them to our perspectives and program for CLUW. These independent radicals are now beginning to look to us for leadership in CLUW because we are the only group that has a worked out alternative strategy and perspective that is ~~neither~~ neither opportunist or sectarian.

In addition, because of the pressures that the secondary leader types are subjected to by the rank and file, some will at times lead fights. In this context there will be occasions that we will want to give them critical support in the context of leading these fights. We expect that these opportunities will open up ~~or~~ in the course of more militant struggles among women, and we must be prepared to and learn how to take advantage of these to increase the room for the rank and file to move ahead. We will also make demands on these women locally and nationally in a political fashion. If they do not work with us to carry them out, we will expose them to the rank and file, as women not really interested in the needs of working women. This is not a matter of orienting to these types, but of working with them on specific actual fights in order to build those fights.

In addition to fighting to bring women workers' struggles into CLUW, and working in this context to build CLUW with the rank and filers and independent industrialized radicals, we must fight for our ideas: class struggle unionism. This means that we must also have an educational and political presence in CLUW, as well as through our participation in the struggles taking place. The vehicles for this presence in CLUW are Workers Power and the CLUW journal passed by the June NC. These are complementary. The journal will

be open to others we are working ~~was~~ with, and has the purpose of becoming the journal where the developing opposition to the bureaucracy exchanges information, discusses perspectives, analysis, of what is going on in CLUW. Workers Power will carry out the ideas of class struggle unionism to their fullest, be making the connections between our trade union policy and our revolutionary Marxist politics.

What is crucial for us to understand today is that we can play a role in CLUW and other developments among working women far beyond our actual numbers and ~~workforce~~ weight in ~~the~~ industry. We are the only organized revolutionary group that has a general strategy and perspective for building a rank and file opposition inside the trade unions that is integrally and concretely related to building the revolutionary party. Because the top women bureaucrats, like their male counterparts, are tied to the maintenance of capitalism, and so will be unwilling to lead ~~the~~ struggles of working women, a vacuum of leadership exists. It ~~is~~ a vacuum that we and others we convince of our strategy can begin to fill, by actually beginning to lead real struggles among working women, based upon what concretely is moving women today such as organizing the unorganized and struggles around equality for women at the workplace.

It is also important to understand that we are in CLUW because of what it represents today. We do not believe that it will be the last organization of working women, or that the working women's movement will be built through CLUW alone. But it does represent the only concrete manifestation of working women beginning to move and for that reason it is the central ~~is~~ focus of our activity among working women today.