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ABSTRACT

Exemplary projects by unions and colleges are laying the groundwork for successful workers education. The University Studies/Weekend College program at Wayne State University (Detroit, MI) has a classical curriculum in general education that is both lofty and grounded in those areas most engaging to workers. Support of the United Auto Workers and the University's Labor Advisory Committee have aided in recruitment and flexible tuition policy. District Council 37 of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees offers varied programs made possible through a financial base negotiated with New York City. Prominent in the educational program is the union's own college. District 1199, a national organization of hospital workers, has pioneered in providing educational opportunities for its low-income, minority membership in the New York area. A training fund pays for general education and occupational upgrading and provides for educational leave. The International Union of Operating Engineers has established a dual enrollment program with two-year colleges that allows students to earn a journeyman's card and an associate degree simultaneously. Successful programs offer varied types of training and have innovative delivery systems, creative financing, and firm union identification with and support for the endeavor. (YLB)

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We would appreciate your help in this endeavor and ask that you fill out the enclosed evaluation sheet. Feel free to write additional comments.

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LEAS

SUCCESSFUL ADULT WORKERS' EDUCATION PROGRAMS

This is one of a series of topical issue papers commissioned by the Labor Education Advisory Services program. Dr. Joel Denker, author of this paper, is Associate Professor of Labor Studies at the University of the District of Columbia, and author of Unions and Universities: The Rise of the New Labor Leader.

Educational institutions have been remote from the lives of workers. The gulf is so great that even in communities where educational opportunities exist for workers they are frequently not aware of them. Workers distrust the world of higher education and many colleges and universites confirm their suspicions. Few schools make any adjustments for hard-pressed full-time workers in their admissions, registration, financial aid, and other procedures. Courses are designed to appeal to a universal student.

Blue collar workers should not be treated condescendingly, as if they constituted a special class incapable of meeting academic demands. Yet in order to appeal to them, the curriculum must, to an important degree, mirror their outlook and concerns. All too often academe focuses on opening its doors to workers only when it is scrambling to boost declining enrollments. Feverish recruitment is bound to produce ill-concieved and shoddy programs.

Adult education in the U.S. has typically drawn people back to school from both middle and upper middle class groups. America has, however, had a tradition of workers education which offered general learning and opportunities for self-improvement to organized and unorganized workers alike. Its heyday was the 1920's, when unions like the Ladies Garment Workers and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers ran literacy and citizenship programs for their members and taught them the arts and social sciences. During the same era the Wisconsin School for Workers in Industry, begun at the University of Wisconsin in 1926, provided courses to unorganized women workers in the humanities.

In more recent years, the interest in the general education of workers has diminished. The broadest training unions and the university labor education centers have been conducting is in "labor liberal arts." These

courses explore the labor dimension of politics, law, economics, and other aspects of the society. The real thrust of labor education today, though, is instruction in the techniques of union leadership -- grievance handling and arbitration, law, collective bargaining. These programs, which are typically short-term (six to eight classes, one-week summer schools, weekend courses), appeal to elected union leadership, appointed staff, and activists at the local, regional, and national levels. There are many in the rank and file, perhaps a majority, who have a passion for education but are not engaged enough in the political life of the union for labor education classes to interest them. Some may want training to improve their skills on the job or for occupational advancement. Others may be drawn to the humanities or sciences even when there is no labor content in these studies. This paper's point of view is that "union education" is a necessary but insufficient endeavor for the labor movement. A more wide-ranging form of education needs to be developed by labor organizations that will excite more than the union officials and those aspiring to leadership. The bulk of this paper contains portraits of exemplary projects by unions and colleges that are laying the groundwork for the "workers education" of the '80s.

A MODEL CURRICULUM:

Wayne State University's University Studies/Weekend College

University administrators are often convinced that the liberal arts just won't "take" with students from blue collar backgrounds. Workers, they assume, would be more comfortable with manual training or "career education," that the humanities are bound to bore workers and, worse than that, inspire them to raise their sights beyond their occupational niche. The "overeducated" worker, according to this outlook, is bound to be frustrated with the narrow contours of his job.

The University Studies/Weekend College program at Wayne State University in Detroit (started in 1973) set out to demolish the image of the plodding worker with only the shallowest horizons. It has done this by forming a classical curriculum in general education which is both lofty and grounded in those areas most engaging to workers. The architects of University Studies/Weekend College, which has been replicated by other institutions, have developed ingenious ways to overcome workers' resistance to higher education. They did this by deliberately altering the practices which have led to low enrollment and high drop out rates among blue collar students. Traditional colleges and universities establish their admissions, registration, scheduling and other policies with youth from middle to upper middle class backgrounds in mind. The success of US/WC hinged on winning the allegiance of shift workers, mostly men in their 30's with family responsibilities, for whom time was a real luxury. When workers enroll in adult education programs, they usually can afford to take only a course or two. Study becomes a series of interruptions as family and work demands interfere. The degree becomes a distant and uncertain prospect.

Everything about US/WC is designed to enable full time workers to attend school full time and attain a degree in four to five years -- a Bachelor of General Studies. The curriculum is presented through a medium -- a series of mutually reinforcing TV courses, workshops, and weekend conferences -- and at times and locations attractive to workers. Successful completion of the TV course, workshop, and conference earn the student 12 credits per quarter. The three courses are knit together by a common theme from one of the areas -- social sciences, humanities, science and technology -- around which the first three years of the program are organized.

If a student was meeting his Social Science requirement, one quarter he might be studying the topic of work and society in each of his classes.

Television presentations of two and one half hours illuminating this theme would be shown in the early morning or evening Monday through Friday and shown again on Sunday. The workshop or discussion group which meets once a week for four hours delves into the issues raised by the television course. Often scheduled around shift time, workshops meet at union halls or at easily accessible community sites — libraries and high schools, for example. Two weekend conferences each quarter which use films, speakers, theatre, and other techniques tie together the quarter's theme. Bonds develop between workers, who work in the same plant but are often isolated from each other, as they attend the same courses throughout the program. Ties are strengthened with the instructor who teaches the same group of students in workshop and weekend conference discussion group.

The leaders of the program are continually modifying the general education curriculum so that it is more in step with the interests of the College's constituencies. Because of the considerable enrollment of trade unionists, a labor studies option has been incorporated in the social science, science, and humanities areas. Students concentrating in labor studies explore occupational health and safety as part of the science and technology area. Similarly, courses are stressing the urban dimension of workers' lives. Students learn about the history of Detroit in the ethnic studies component of the Social Science curriculum.

More than an exciting curriculum is needed to draw students to the US/WC program. Its founders developed an imaginative strategy of promotion and recruitment, registration and admissions to widen awareness of the program and to make access as hurdle-free as possible. The best prospects for students were organized groups, UAW workers, civil service employees (e.g., police), company staff (e.g., Michigan Bell). Many of these individuals worked for institutions that provided incentives for further education. Union members

from the Big Three -- General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler -- receive tuition refund benefits under their national agreements (up to $1,000 a year). The companies agreed that the Weekend program qualified for reimbursement under the aid plan.

Support by the UAW has been invaluable in the drive to recruit worker students. Educational representatives at the four regional offices of the UAW in the Detroit area ignited the interest of the members. The UAW mobilized support by distributing flyers about US/WC, putting notices in local papers, and providing free classroom space in union halls. Some committeemen took on the responsibilities of "educational stewards," providing information and advice about the college, alerting members to their tuition aid benefits, and recruiting new students. Other UAW officials enrolled in the program.

The Labor Advisory Committee of the University, which is dominated by the UAW, has become a bulwark of the Weekend College program. Its members were available to defend the college from any attacks on its program. Excited by the labor studies option, the Committee pressed the University to adopt a more flexible policy on the tuition refund that would boost enrollment. Auto workers typically pay for their course first and receive their reimbursement only after successful completion of it. The present arrangement permits the worker on a tuition aid plan to put down a minimum payment on beginning a course and pay the balance at the end.

Having been sold on the Weekend College, students enter a registration process, a streamlined system adapted for full time workers. Students with a high school diploma or GED certificate can be admitted and registered at convenient locations; e.g., local union halls, community centers, libraries, job sites. Students do not have to run a gauntlet of separate

university offices. In addition to advising and registering students at these sites, counselors handle financial aid , collect tuition, and run orientation sessions.

Interest from other educational institutions and labor unions in the Wayne State model led to the establishment of the To Educate the People Consortium. A number of institutions across the country have now adopted the curriculum model on their own campuses. The higher education division of the American Federation of Teachers calls its version of the model PACE (Project for Adult College Education) and is actively promoting it among AFT organized faculties. One of the most impressive of the PACE efforts is the one at Longview Community College in Kansas City, Missouri, a five semester interdisciplinary program (e.g., Social Science, Humanities, Biology and Natural Science) leading to the Associates Degree. The program, which uses the television, conference, and workshop vehicles is notable for its strong ties to the labor movement. The Advisory Board at Longview has representatives from the key sectors of Kansas City's labor community. The Teamsters, Auto Workers, and Kansas City's Central Labor Council have vigorously backed the PACE program. Two staff members of the UAW, which has a large membership in Kansas City, were assigned to promote it. The Operating Engineers Local 101 will award a one-year full tuition scholarship to any member enrolling in the Longview program.

EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL UNIONISM:

AFSCME District Council 37 and IBEW Local 3

Unions have much more to offer their members than wages and benefits. Labor organizations that provide for a broad range of their members' needs often make education a keystone of their program. One such union is District Council 37 of AFSCME (American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees), which represents 110,000 members from New York City

civil service locals in hosptials, schools, parks and other areas. Council 37's leader, Victor Gotbaum, has moved this "way of life union" into providing legal aid, activities for retirees, day care, and other services for city workers. The union's educational efforts similarly reflect Gotbaum's vision of workers as more than management's hired hands: "As a union, we want to exploit workers' potential as human beings, and have geared our program toward careers and individuals."

The $1.5 million annual educational fund Council 37 has negotiated with the City of New York provides the financial base which makes its varied programs possible. The city pays $25 a year for each eligible member into the fund and the union administers it. In contrast, tuition aid plans are operated by management, which has insisted that all funded training be "job related." Council 37's fund, which pays for tuition reimbursement as well as for the costs of the union's many other educational activities, is not hampered by this restriction. The wider scope of education that this policy permits has increased participation by members in Council programs.

Classes and other activities are run out of the union's headquarters in lower Manhattan, which is convenient to many members' homes. Scheduling of programs on evenings and Saturdays enhances their appeal. The Council actively publicizes its offerings through the newspaper, union meetings, and a hotline. Practical courses -- skills in taking high school equivalency or civil service exams, English as a second language, reading, typing and steno -- are very popular. The classes involve minimal expense to members, who have to pay for little more than books and materials. The union also offers such services as tutoring, individual and group counseling, and a learning laboratory.

Each member is eligible to draw on $450 in tuition refund monies to take college courses. This feature of the fund has encouraged the union to

contract with city schools for career advancement programs. One course given by the Central School for Respiratory Therapy trains nurse's aides for jobs as therapy technicians. The Council requires that all such courses carry credit, so that they can be used to win promotions.

Prominent in the educational program is the union's own college, "The Downtown Campus of District 37," a division of College of New Rochelle located at the Council's headquarters. Run jointly by the union and New Rochelle (the union has a veto over the appointment of the Campus director), the college offers union members a chance to earn a B.A. degree while working and to finance it with their tuition refund. The large numbers of members going through the union's high school equivalency program were an important corps of students for the new institution.

The curriculum of the Downtown Campus is in the broad areas of liberal arts, general education classes that are linked to the problems city workers face in such service occupations as health, housing, and welfare work. Seventy-five percent of the credits required for the degree are represented by seminars on such themes as the Urban Community, Science and Human Values, American Experience. Up to 30 credits can be earned through the recognition of a student's life experience. Built into each seminar, which meets an evening a week, are projects which demand that students apply the concepts they are learning to the urban environment. Students in an Adolescent Psychology class were asked to design a neighborhood youth center. The courses are typically interdisciplinary. One on the Human Body, which was taught by a psychologist and a painter, combined insights from psychology, art, anatomy, and dance. The curriculum constantly evolves based on changing student interests. Every term students participate in a series of discussions with the college staff which determine the courses to be offered during the next session.

Although the basic orientation of the Downtown Campus is general education, students interested in improving their effectiveness as trade unionists can pursue a labor studies option. Members can enroll in the "labor liberal arts" courses offered by Cornell and thereby earn 24 credits toward their degree.

The drawing card of the Educational Fund's programs is the chance it offers union members to advance on the civil service job ladders. This is true of both the College of New Rochelle as well as of the more practical training programs the union makes available. Entry-level clerical and hospital workers, largely black and female, ambitious to improve their occupational standing, are the union members most likely to take advantage of the fund.

Local 3 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the large New York City local headed by Harry Van Arsdale, like Council 37 has been able to accumulate an abundant trust fund for the educational improvement of its members. A "welfare state local," to use Derek Bok and John Dunlop's image, Local 3 has negotiated an Educational and Cultural Trust Fund with the Electrical Contractors of New York. The fund provides tuition reimbursements for every member and his or her spouse and pays for four year college scholarships awarded to their children.

It also subsidizes apprenticeship training as well as a novel combination of apprenticeship and labor studies instruction offered at New York City's Labor College. Members enrolled at this institution can use the combined credit from recognition of their apprenticeship (four years of training equals 32 semester hours in electrical technology) and liberal arts and labor studies courses to earn a two year degree. Local 3 picks up the tuition costs for those participating in this program.

Local 3 operates a year round residential center on its 314 acre estate, the Bayberry Center in Southhampton, Long Island, where members are sent for courses in "critical thinking." Electrical workers spend from Sunday night to Friday afternoon investigating such issues as the rights and wrongs of abortions. The Trust Fund makes up for the wages lost during the period.

The Fund's benefits are not limited to formal education. It also pays for attendance at artistic and cultural events — the ballet, concerts, plays.

UPWARD MOBILITY FOR HEALTH WORKERS:

1199's Educational Program

District 1199, a national organization of hospital workers (part of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union), has pioneered in providing educational opportunities for its low income, minority membership in the New York City area. The union's leaders recognized that credentials were critical to advancement in the health care industry, a field in which educational requirements for jobs were continually being raised. Nursing students with four year degrees have an edge over those with two year diplomas. College training is now required for positions that once could be achieved through on-the-job experience or short-term courses. Promoting education was also seen by 1199's leadership as a way of keeping black and Spanish workers, largely women, from being locked into low level jobs. The union negotiated a training fund with the non-profit hospital association of New York City that would pay for both general education and occupational upgrading of its members. Employers pay what amounts to 1% of gross payroll into the fund for these purposes.

Union members rely on the fund to pursue a variety of educational

goals. The fund pays for a school which the union runs to prepare workers for high school equivalency exams and to train them in the skills they will need in college. Tuition aid is available to reimburse members for courses taken for either personal development or career advancement.

1199 offers their members an inducement for educational advancement rare for blue collar and service workers, a provision for educational leave. A member who is accepted into a full time course of study in one of the programs run jointly by city colleges and teaching hospitals and sponsored by the fund receives a leave from his or her employer. The Fund pays the worker a stipend equal to 85% of net salary over a period ranging from one to four years, depending on the program's length. Courses in which members can use educational leave include x-ray, nuclear medicine, nursing, and radiotherapy.

APPRENTICES GO TO COLLEGE

Apprenticeship, one of the oldest forms of education, has enjoyed little respectability or recognition from the academy. The International Union of Operation Engineers has led the way in overcoming this second class status. They have looked to community colleges, low cost institutions easily accessible to their members, as the schools most likely to adopt their innovation of "dual enrollment." Free of the weight of university custom and orthodoxy, the two year schools were the logical places for a program in which a student could simultaneously earn his journeyman's card and attain an Associate's degree. Unions had already developed apprenticeship programs on the community college level -- the most common relationship between the labor movement and these institutions. The Engineers wanted to extend these ties to include the conversion of the apprenticeship experience into college credits. These credits together

with those earned from meeting the college's degree requirements (e.g., English and Social Studies courses) would ease the worker's path to a credential.

The Operating Engineers put a premium on apprenticeship training because of the skills required to run increasingly more intricate machinery. Administered by committees with an equal representation from both the union and employer and financed by employer contributions into a trust fund, the apprenticeship involves both classroom teaching and on-the-job training. The apprenticeship lasts a minimum of four years for stationary engineers and three to four years for those engaged in hoisting. The establishment of a dual enrollment program requires that the union negotiate an agreement with the college stipulating the credit hours to which the training is equivalent. Typically, community colleges have granted between half and three-fourths of the credits for a two year degree to students based on an operating engineer's apprenticeship. The formula frequently used in this determination equates fifteen apprenticeship class hours with one credit hour. The trust fund pays the costs of the apprenticeship instruction in this arrangement.

The next step in the development of the dual enrollment concept was the addition of a labor studies specialty to these programs. Reese Hammond, the Engineers' Education Director, developed a proposal to test this idea and the George Meany Center for Labor Studies secured funding from the U.S. Department of Labor for the project. The project envisioned a two year degree that combined coursework in labor studies, the general education classes of the community college, and the science instruction and work experience of the apprenticeship. The students would be members of any of the crafts working toward journeyman standing. The project intended that these programs be acceptable to four year institutions so

that students wishing to do so could use their credits toward an undergraduate degree. Labor advisory committees would be crucial for promoting these programs and for helping evaluate the credit worthiness of apprenticeship instruction.

The project believed that starting several pilot projects at community colleges was the best way to excite interest in the innovation. Four schools -- Bunker Hill Community College in Charlestown, Massachusetts, College of the Mainland in Texas City, Texas, Des Moines Area Community College in Des Moines, Iowa, Rhode Island Junior College in Warwick, Rhode Island -- were chosen for the experiment. All now have programs, each with individual variations but faithful to the basic concept of uniting apprenticeship and labor studies. The Meany Center has run training sessions for faculty, administrators, and members of advisory committees from these schools. The project is also developing model labor studies courses -- A Survey of Labor Relations, American Labor History, The Structure and Functions of Unions, Economics of Collective Bargaining, Contract Administration, Labor Law, and Comparative Labor Movements -- that can be used in these ventures. It has contracted with the labor educators to write texts in each of these areas.

CONCLUSION

No easy formula can be drawn from the experience of these projects that can be applied in every union and college setting. Each group of workers has a unique set of educational needs. It is possible to identify the ingredients of successful workers education from a survey of projects serving such diverse workers as hospital employees, civil service workers, auto workers, and building tradesmen. Projects should not be tied to one mold of education and one form of presenting it. The more varied the

types of training -- basic education, high school equivalency, labor studies, college level humanities -- the broader the appeal a workers education program will have. It is also helpful if they build progressively on each other -- that is, if a worker can move from a high school equivalency course to enrollment in a two year or four year college. Conventional classroom instruction should not be the only teaching technique used. The TV courses of Weekend College and the apprenticeship of "dual enrollment" are examples of other routes to learning that workers can use.

Unions and universities working together will have to revamp the traditional delivery system that so frequently impedes access of workers to higher education. The Council 37 and the Weekend College projects contain inventions in scheduling, admissions, registration, and classroom location that other ventures can emulate. These changes are calculated to eliminate the intimidation and loss of time entailed in the workers' first contacts with the world of higher education.

Creative financing has been an outstanding feature in these experiments. Tuition aid plans, monies for educational leave, and educational funds are methods for supporting workers education that unions with the leverage to extract such concessions should consider negotiating.

Critical to the success of any project in workers education is firm union identification with and support for the endeavor. This can take any one of a number of forms -- labor advisory committees, union educational counselors, union-operated residential centers or colleges.

Above all, unions wanting to sponsor educational oportunities for their members should never underestimate the appetite for learning that an exciting program can unleash. The programs discussed in this paper represent only the first glimmer of what is possible. These models will

be even more important if they stimulate unions and universities to imagine and build new educational alternatives for workers.

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