ILR Labor Advance, Fall 2008

ILR Extension Labor Programs

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Welcome to our new newsletter for Cornell’s ILR Extension Labor Programs, the Cornell ILR Labor Advance. We plan to publish twice a year to keep you informed about labor programs, events, research, issues and services at Cornell ILR that can assist you and your organization.

In the past several years, our labor work at the ILR Extension has broadened to include many aspects beyond the traditional and vital labor education and training we have been known for since 1947. Through it all, our mission remains advancing the world of work for workers and their communities. We conduct research for unions, convene public policy debates and look at cross-union and international issues that impact the labor movement around the globe. We participate in large global and national projects affecting workers around the world. And, we explore issues that concern workers who may be outside the traditional membership structures of the labor movement.

We constantly hear from our friends and colleagues outside Cornell, “We didn’t know you did that, too …” The purpose of the new Cornell ILR Labor Advance is to give you a fuller picture of our work, and the impact it’s having on the labor field, public policy and advancing workers’ rights, including the big issues affecting the future of the labor movement.

You are our partners—so please contact us with your feedback on this first issue and let us know how this newsletter can best serve the needs of your labor organization.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Sally Alvarez
Director of Labor Programs

Labor at a Crossroads

BY FRED KOTLER, DIRECTOR, NYS AFL-CIO/CORNELL UNION LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE


More than 80 high-level and emerging union leaders and staff attended six days of workshops, plenary sessions and social events as part of the institute’s 13-month, 12-credit certificate course that includes four weekend seminars, elective courses and individual projects.

A wide range of public and private sector unions are represented from industries as varied as entertainment, health care, education and construction. This joining of leaders from throughout the labor movement distinguishes the Cornell program from single-organization based education and training.

The opening plenary session, presented by Jeff Grabelsky, director of Cornell University’s Union Building Strategies Program, urged union leaders to think strategically as a labor movement rather than as stand-alone unions. The rest of the week was spent in workshops on regional power building, strategies for increasing labor’s impact beyond the workplace and in communities, analyzing leadership styles and behaviors, developing strategic leverage, and engaging in a series of team-building challenges in an afternoon outdoors at the nearby Cayuga Nature Center.

Key presenters included noted University of California labor historian Nelson Lichtenstein; and the longtime civil rights activist and leader, Rev. Nelson N. Johnson, pastor of Faith Community Church, Greensboro, N.C., who spoke about “Building a Movement for Social Change: Challenges and Opportunities for the 2008 Presidential Election.” Jeff Faux, founding president of the Washington, D.C.-based Economic Policy Institute, shared his views on a global elite that is waging class warfare against working people throughout the world. Faux emphasized the common interests among workers in the United States, Mexico, and Canada, and he argued for a unifying strategy among the labor organizations in the three nations.

“Our class at the Union Leadership Institute really examined what it means, and what it would take, to build unity among labor organizations in terms of strategy, yes, but resources as well,” said Mike Riggio, who directs the White Collar Division of AFSCME’s 120,000-member District Council 37 in New York City. “On a small scale, we made the idea of unity a reality by raising $3,000 from the members of our class to help the organizing work of the United Farm Workers. An ethos of the Institute is that it challenges those of us in the labor movement to see ourselves not just as leaders of our local unions, but as a community of union leaders who together can shape an agenda to win concrete gains for all working people.”

The institute is conducting a formal evaluation among alumni and sponsors to measure its long-term impact on individual and organization leadership development.

For more information about the Union Leadership Institute, contact Fred Kotler, Director, at fbk2@cornell.edu or 607-255-4462. The institute website is www.ilr.cornell.edu/uli.
Quality, accessible and affordable child care are essential for parents to work the necessary hours, improve their skills and perform their jobs without undue absence or lateness on the job.

“I had to fire my first sitter because she was always drunk and now my son’s girlfriend sits for me. It’s cheaper but she’s always late so now my good attendance is down the tubes.”

“I adapted my sister’s four kids who were in foster care and with my four, now I have eight and I am a single parent working the night shift at the hospital and juggling child care for eight now.”

These experiences were recorded through Working Parents For a Working New York, an initiative launched in 2007 and funded by the New York City Council. Launched by Brooklyn-based Councilman Bill de Blasio, it studies the effect of child care subsidies for selected members of the city’s unionized workforce over a two-year period: 1199SEIU Home Care Workers; District Council 37 AFSCME Municipal Hospital Workers; and Teamsters Local 237 School Safety Agents. The study focuses on the variables of attendance, performance and productivity.

The initiative is backed by the New York Unions Coalition (a committee of the New York City Central Labor Council and New York State AFL-CIO); District Council 37 - AFSCME; Teamsters Local 237; 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East; Transport Workers Union Local 100; United Federation of Teachers Local 2; UNITE-HERE; RWDSU/UFCW; OPEIU Local 153; CWA District 1, Local 1105 & 1180; District Council 1707 AFSCME; Civil Service Employees Association; NYS Nurses Association; Council of Supervisors and Administration; Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1005; American Federation of Government Employees District 2; Local 32-BI-NU; NYS Public Employees Federation; UAW Locals 209 & 210; UFEW Local 1500; United Postal Workers; and United Teamsters Local 3.

Cornell ILR directs the project team doing the case study research. Supporting the study is a labormanagement partnership consisting of DC77 NYC Health and Hospitals Corporation (HHC), Local 237 AFSCME; Police Department and 1199SEIU/NYC Homecare Subcontractors. The Consortium for Worker Education administers the child care subsidies from the Agency for Children’s Services and Child Care Inc. provides informational services.

“When our union was approached about participating in the Working Parents for a Working New York Project, we signed on right away,” said Uljan Roberts, Executive Director of AFSCME’s 120,000-member District Council 37. “We had the right demographic of working parents to draw from, and the cooperation of one of our major employers, the HHC. This project will benefit both the union member and the hospital.”

Through this study, which aims to increase access to quality and affordable child care, 190 municipal employees currently earning up to 250% of the poverty level, receive child care subsidies and assistance covering 500 children. Often one paycheck away from hunger, homelessness and the loss of child care, these subsidies fill the gap, keep children in quality care and help workers remain productive on the job.

When provided assistance, parents upgrade to licensed, reliable child care which is correlated to less absenteeism and better work performance. Without assistance, 85% of study participants arrived late or left work early; 80% had to use sick days resulting in work-related consequences including 28% who took no leave and 48% who reported that overall job performance was negatively affected. The study documents that there is a significant relationship between quality childcare and worker retention.

The graph at left depicts the before and after costs of three families receiving subsidies which have now upgraded to licensed, more reliable and improved quality of child care. Employers need dependable workers with reliable child care. It reduces the bottom-line costs of overtime for coverage or replacement costs due to job turnover. For example, the replacement and training costs for a Patient Care Associate at HHC are $8,500. Continued research and final outcomes of the study will clarify these correlations. A compilation of employer data with worker self-reports will aid in determining the relationship of a worker’s experience and her or his measured productivity and performance.

“Local 237 is proud to be part of the Working Parents for a Working New York initiative and we look forward to the day when studies like this lead to permanent child care benefits for parents in the New York municipal workforce,” said Teamsters Local 237 president Gregory Floyd. “The Cornell study is the first of its kind and will provide essential documentation to influence public policy on work and family issues,” added 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East president George Gresham. “We are very excited that 1199SEIU/NYC homecare workers are part of the City Council Initiative to study the effect of providing childcare benefits on worker retention and productivity.”

The research initiative, a two-year project, will conclude mid 2009. The results will have implications for policy recommendations to the municipal government and the collective bargaining strategies of labor unions.

For more information: contact KC Wagner at kwagner@cornell.edu

Cornell Launches New Black Trade Union Leadership Academy

STEVE KING, PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Excitement and anticipation were in the air at the ILR School Conference Center in New York City on April 12, 2008, when Cornell launched the new Black Trade Union Leadership Academy. Modeled on a highly successful program for black union leaders at the University of California Berkeley Labor Center, Cornell’s new program grew out of requests from a number of unions in the NYC area for a similar program.

Forging a united, yet diverse, labor movement capable of creating and achieving a common agenda for working people is a challenge faced by every union. This unique new leadership program helps leaders develop a critical approach to the relationship of black workers and the labor movement, both historically and today. A key component is examining the role of organizing and its impact on black workers, unions, the larger labor movement, and the black community. “The Black Trade Union Leadership Academy was a very valuable program in providing insight on the history, struggles, accomplishments and the importance of African Americans in the labor movement,” said Academy participant Sharon Lovejoy-Hall, who directs education and training for CSEA Local 1000. “The information gained was helpful in providing leadership skills and empowerment to organize the unorganized and internally build unity and solidarity in our unions.”

The curriculum was developed in consultation with leaders and educators from UFT, CSEA, Teamsters, DC37, UNITE-HERE, AFGE, and the AFL-CIO. Lessons learned in the California program were shared by Katie Quan, who spent the year in NYC as Cornell’s Visiting Labor Scholar from the UC Berkeley Labor Center. Veteran labor educator Bernard Moore from UNITE-HERE taught the program, ably assisted by ILR staff members Legna Cabrera and Steven King. Participants came from a wide range of unions, including 1199SEIU; NABET-CWA Local 16; Labors’ (LEROF); DC 37 - AFSCME; CSEA; and Teamsters Local 210.

“The Cornell’s Black Trade Union Leadership Academy is a very valuable program for building a Black movement, and a very important one,” said Cornell ILR President Elizabeth D. Schorr. “It’s a program that demonstrates Cornell’s commitment to being a resource for social justice and the labor movement.”

The program ran for four Saturdays over a six-week period, and culminated in the awarding of a Leadership Certificate from Cornell. Bill Fletcher, Jr., AFGE education director, and former president of TransAfrica Forum, gave the Academy’s opening address on April 19, 2008.

The second session of the Black Trade Union Leadership Academy is scheduled for the spring of 2009. Please contact Steve King at 212-340-2821 or sk995@cornell.edu to register or for more information.
The United Nations released its world’s comprehensive green jobs analysis in September 2008. Sean Sweeney and Jill Kubit of the Cornell ILR Global Labor Institute co-authored the report with Michael Renner, a senior researcher at the Washington, D.C.-based Worldwatch Institute. The 350-page study “Green Jobs: Toward Sustainable Work in a Low-Carbon World” is part of the Green Jobs Initiative, a joint collaboration between the U.N. Environment Programme (UNEP), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).

The study documents the significant progress made so far in creating green jobs around the world, particularly with the growth of renewable energy. Many of the conclusions suggest that green jobs could grow on a mass scale in years ahead through development of renewable energy sources, energy efficiency, fuel-efficient vehicles, reforestation, sustainable agriculture and by expanding public transportation.

Investment in renewable energy has increased dramatically to around $150 billion annually, or roughly 20% of total investment in energy generation. This has generated at least 2.3 million jobs in wind, solar and other clean energy sources.

However, the report makes clear that a green jobs future for the planet is by no means inevitable. The levels of investment required, however, the report makes clear that a green jobs future for the planet is by no means inevitable. The levels of investment required...
Online Programs: Distance Learning

The On-Line Labor Studies Certificate Program was launched in 2007 by Cornell ILR Extension. It is the first distance-learning program the ILR School has offered specifically for union members and activists.

Union members from California to Florida, Alaska to Maine, Ireland to United Arab Emirates now have the opportunity to learn from members of the Cornell Adjunct Faculty Association as well as ILR Extension faculty about employment and labor law, labor history, contract bargaining and other subjects critical to the development of leadership skills and an activist’s orientation.

Although most students had never taken an on-line course before, they said they enjoyed interacting with unionists from other states, countries and backgrounds. “The major advantage of the on-line courses is that the work can be done at your convenience,” said Edward A. Cecato, Executive Vice President of the Niagara Falls Teachers union. “So even though my job as a teacher, my family responsibilities, and my position as an officer in my local union require a great deal of time and commitment, the on-line courses allow me the flexibility to participate in the class whenever I have the time.”

Customized Education and Training

Often a labor union’s specific goals are best addressed through the collective training of its members, officers or staff. Cornell’s labor staff work with unions to custom design an education program on topics such as strategic planning, organizational and staff development, preparation for collective bargaining and new-member organizing. These custom programs can be held at the union’s headquarters or at Cornell ILR’s conference center in Manhattan.

For more information, contact Gene Carroll at gc32@cornell.edu or at 212-340-2853.

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The Union Leadership Workshop Series – New York City

January 14-15  Managing & Supervising with Labor's Values
February 24-27  Conflict Resolution for Union Leaders
March 11-12  Advanced Public Speaking for Labor Advocates
March 25-27  Strategic Research for Labor Organizers
April 15-17  Effective Union Preparation for Arbitration
May 14  Building Membership Participation and Union Solidarity through Diversity Awareness and Inclusion
May 20-21  Assertive Grievance Handling
June 10-12  Strategic Contract Campaigns

Fees: Unless indicated otherwise, the fee for a one-day program is $350; a two-day workshop is $500; and three days is $750. Fee includes food service and class materials.

College Credit Labor Studies Program – New York City

WINTER 2009

Register now for the Cornell Labor Studies Program in NYC! Winter 2009 courses begin the week of January 5th and run one evening a week for 12-weeks. This program offers area union leaders, activists, and staff the opportunity to earn college credit while gaining a strong theoretical and practical understanding on union-side labor relations. All courses are specifically designed to meet the needs of working adults. Class size is small and structured to build on the knowledge and experience of all participants. Admission is open to all, tuition is low ($550 per course) and partial scholarships are still available.

January 5 – March 23, 2009  Labor History  Mondays
January 6 – March 24, 2009  Arbitration  Tuesdays
January 6 – March 24, 2009  Labor Law  Tuesdays
January 7 – March 25, 2009  Labor and the American Economy  Wednesdays
January 7 – March 25, 2009  Women and Work  Wednesdays
January 8 – March 26, 2009  Challenges to the Public Sector  Thursdays
January 8 – March 26, 2009  Union Strategies for Health and Safety  Thursdays

If you are interested in enrolling or have questions about the program, please call or Email Program Director Pamela Whitefield (212) 340-2847 or pw39@cornell.edu

To register call 212-340-2827 or send Email to jp424@cornell.edu

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