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Richard W. Hurd

Cornell University, rwh8@cornell.edu

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U.S. Labor 2006: Strategic Developments Across the Divide

Abstract

The AFL-CIO and Change to Win have learned to co-exist without debilitating acrimony. The AFL-CIO has established Industry Coordinating Committees to facilitate cooperative bargaining and organizing ventures. On the political front, the AFL-CIO took the lead in labor's 2006 electoral operations and conducted an extensive, efficient, and unified campaign. Change to Win unions worked together to build strategies for a growth agenda. The success of UNITE-HERE's Hotel Workers Rising Campaign indicates the potential of this approach. Difficult challenges remain, but the strategic developments show signs of life and offer hope that labor may find a path to the future.

Keywords

labor movement, unions, AFL-CIO, Change to Win, UNITE HERE

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U.S. Labor 2006:
Strategic Developments Across the Divide

RICHARD W. HURD
Cornell University

The AFL-CIO and Change to Win have learned to co-exist without debilitating acrimony. The AFL-CIO has established Industry Coordinating Committees to facilitate cooperative bargaining and organizing ventures. On the political front, the AFL-CIO took the lead in labor's 2006 electoral operations and conducted an extensive, efficient, and unified campaign. Change to Win unions worked together to build strategies for a growth agenda. The success of UNITE-HERE's Hotel Workers Rising Campaign indicates the potential of this approach. Difficult challenges remain, but the strategic developments show signs of life and offer hope that labor may find a path to the future.

I. Introduction

In assessing the impact of the 2005 split in the U.S. labor movement it is important to keep in mind that it was precipitated by persistent decline. John Sweeney had assumed the presidency of the AFL-CIO ten years earlier based on a promise to lead labor's resurgence with a strategic program that emphasized organizing. True to his word, for five years Sweeney made every effort to promote this priority—he introduced the Union Summer program for young activists; he expanded the Organizing Institute's recruitment and placement activities; and he exhorted affiliates to embrace the federation's Changing to Organize agenda. Ultimately, the reality of the AFL-CIO's limited influence over national unions stalled Sweeney's initiative. Most important, few unions were willing to allocate 30 percent of their resources to organizing, which was the centerpiece of Changing to Organize. Because of national union leaders' determination to retain authority over strategic and budgetary decisions related to organizing and bargaining, the federation began to shift its attention away from Sweeney's original program.

By 2001 the AFL-CIO officers and key staff had begun to deemphasize organizing and instead were concentrating on how to build a political agenda for labor law reform. This otherwise reasonable reorientation frustrated the unions that had embraced the Changing to Organize agenda—most notably the SEIU (service employees), UNITE (needle trades and textiles), HERE (hotel employees), and UBC (carpenters). The UBC left the AFL-CIO in 2001, and by 2002 the other three were calling for open debate within the federation about the best way to halt labor's continuing loss in density. They argued that the root problem was the failure of other unions to reallocate substantial resources to organizing. In 2003 these unions were joined by LIUNA (construction laborers), a union that also had decided to stake its future on an expanded organizing program. This group formed the New Unity Partnership (NUP), and the strategic debate about labor's future went public (Hurd, 2004).

For its first year, the NUP was clear and outspoken about its perspective, but when it came to action, these allies were content to build a foundation for strategic collaboration and mutual support.

The most important development was the 2004 merger of UNITE and HERE. Any serious challenge to the AFL-CIO was put on hold while unions still in the federation joined forces in an attempt to defeat the reelection of George W. Bush. When this effort failed, the gloves came off and the NUP unions went on the offensive in their challenge to John Sweeney and his pragmatic mode of operation.

The details of the debate that lasted from November 2004 until the AFL-CIO convention in July 2005 have been clearly described in the *JLR* by Masters, Gibney, and Zagenczyk (2006). The key developments on the NUP side were the additions of the IBT (teamsters), the UFCW (food and commercial), and UFW (farmworkers) to the ranks of the dissidents. Neither the IBT nor the UFCW had established a culture of strategic organizing, but the leaders of these unions were convinced by the arguments of the SEIU and its allies, not to mention the aura of success projected by the key leaders of these unions. In spite of its size, the involvement of the tiny UFW was symbolically important because of its reputation as a champion of poor immigrant workers.

Although the 2004–2005 debate was publicly cast in terms of restructuring proposals and increasing the authority of the AFL-CIO over affiliates, the underlying issue for the dissident unions always was organizing. And in spite of the arguments that raged about the role of the federation and who would be elected as its president, there were early signs that the key leaders of the coalition that would adopt the name Change To Win (CTW) had little interest in compromise and were preparing for a mass exodus (e.g., Stern, 2005a). For their part, AFL-CIO leaders worked tirelessly to forge a compromise that would keep the labor movement united. When these efforts failed, they were still determined to rally affiliates and build a positive program to expand labor's influence.

II. Contrasting Perspectives

In the aftermath of the formal split, there was great bitterness among the unions that retained allegiance to the AFL-CIO. At a pre-Labor Day 2005 press conference, John Sweeney voiced his displeasure: "It is a real tragedy for working people. You can be sure that [the split in the labor movement] has led to the popping of champagne corks at the White House, at Wal-Mart corporate headquarters and on Wall Street" (Tumulty, 2005). The leaders of the CTW unions were described by AFL-CIO loyalists as arrogant and self-serving and were denounced for undermining solidarity and abandoning union democracy. There were dire warnings of raids by CTW to steal members from AFL-CIO affiliates and deep concern that the movement would be divided at the state and local level threatening mutual support and cooperation on political campaigns (Crosby, 2006). More practically, the departure of organizations accounting for approximately one-third of the AFL-CIO's membership forced budget cuts that affected many aspects of the federation's operation.

While the AFL-CIO reorganized, CTW held its founding convention in St. Louis on September 27. The new federation selected Anna Burger of SEIU as Chair and Edgar Romney of UNITE-HERE as Vice Chair. Burger became the first woman to lead a U.S. labor federation, and Romney became the first African-American to serve at such a high level of federation leadership. At the convention, IBT President Jim Hoffa rebutted the criticisms leveled at CTW: "There are some who say we are dividing the labor movement. I say we are rebuilding the labor movement, but this time we are building it right" (Greenhouse, 2005a).

The CTW unions projected an unflinching optimism. They argued that by shifting substantial resources to organizing, conducting joint campaigns where appropriate, and promoting strategic support among members of the coalition, CTW would pave the way for growth. They declared that they had no desire to fight with the AFL-CIO and would be content to build power in those industries already

within their core jurisdictions. Also, the key leaders of CTW publicly voiced opposition to raiding. CTW's strategic approach and pledge not to engage in a feud with the established federation convinced many labor relations academics that the split would not be destructive. For example, Milkman (2006) argued that "the 2005 schism in the house of labor . . . could spark needed resurgence within both camps. . . . The notion that competition between the two union groupings will lead them both to perform more effectively is compelling. . . ." At least as many observers view the split as counterproductive, or at best irrelevant to labor's future (e.g., Chaison, 2007).

III. Uneasy Truce

Local leaders on both sides of the split were troubled by how it would affect cooperation on the ground. In the lead-up to its 2005 convention, the AFL-CIO's officers indicated that if the CTW unions left the federation, their locals would not be allowed to participate in state and municipal labor bodies. For their part the national presidents of CTW unions seemed not to care. After the split, local union activists on both sides joined together to demand that some type of accommodation be negotiated.

The intensity of the bottom-up pressure was a testament to the success of the Sweeney administration's Union Cities program. In 1995 the AFL-CIO was largely moribund at the local level. The Union Cities initiative provided funds and staff support to promote cross-fertilization and a sense of activism in Central Labor Councils (CLCs) nationwide. The result was a strengthened political program and expanded mutual support networks for organizing and contract campaigns.

Those engaged in the more activist CLCs were simply unwilling to walk away from ten years of hard work building union solidarity. The pressure from the grassroots ultimately forced the two federations to forge some type of settlement (Crosby, 2006). On October 4, 2005, the AFL-CIO announced that agreement had been reached in principle to offer CTW locals the option of applying for "solidarity charters" which would allow for full participation in CLCs and state federations (Sweeney, 2005).

As of Fall 2006 approximately 2,200 solidarity charters had been issued to nearly 1,500 CTW locals (Holland, 2006). Nonetheless the national federations have continued to bicker about the details of the arrangement. The AFL-CIO has periodically complained that CTW should do more to underwrite the costs of supporting the work of CLCs and state federations. Even more contentious was the question of extending the solidarity charter arrangement to cover the UFW and LIUNA, omitted from the original agreement because these two unions retained membership in both federations. When the UFW quit the AFL-CIO in January 2006, its locals were denied access to solidarity charters. This was ultimately resolved, but only after CTW presidents recommended that their locals stop paying dues to CLCs and state federations (Tasini, 2006).

In spite of the sparring, the solidarity charter arrangement seems to be working reasonably well so far, with most CTW affiliates retaining their local ties and commitments (Fuentes, 2006; Andrews, 2006; Nesbitt, 2006). The future of the program is in doubt, however, since it officially expires on December 31, 2006. This is not a major concern for CTW national leaders. According to Anna Burger, "We don't really care about the solidarity charters" (Burger, 2006a). In a possible foreshadow of a more divided future, CTW locals have taken the step of establishing separate state federations in Minnesota, Michigan, and Nebraska (Burger, 2006a; "Nebraska Change-to-Win. . . ." *Omaha World Herald*, 2006).

Although ambiguous about many forms of cooperation with their counterparts in the rival federation, CTW unions have at least refrained from raiding established AFL-CIO units. However, there have been some bitter confrontations between SEIU and AFSCME (state, county, and municipal

employees) during organizing campaigns among home health care and day care workers in California, Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, and municipal employees in Texas. A truce was finally declared on June 7, 2006, when the two unions signed an agreement resolving 27 jurisdictional disputes (Von Bergen, 2006). The agreement even provided for joint representation of some large units in Pennsylvania and Texas. Similarly, the IBT and the CWA (communications workers) agreed to jointly represent workers at US Airways after the merger with America West (Crosby, 2006).

Another sign of a potentially contentious future is a rupture in the AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department (BCTD) in February 2006, orchestrated by LIUNA several months before its official departure from the federation in May. LIUNA joined with three AFL-CIO affiliates, the operating engineers, the bricklayers, and the ironworkers, plus the UBC and IBT to form the National Construction Alliance (Greenhouse, 2006a). Although the split in the BCTD has not been replicated at the local level, it stands as a symbol of continuing discontent with established labor movement institutions.

IV. AFL-CIO Strategy 2006

A year after the split, the AFL-CIO has clearly further deemphasized its role in the organizing arena. Organizing is still important, but national unions control funding and strategic decisions. In his Labor Day press conference John Sweeney announced that four key affiliates have increased their organizing budget by a total of \$100 million (Sweeney, 2006). Meanwhile, the AFL-CIO itself reasonably has decided to concentrate on political action. A centerpiece of the political effort is its Voice@Work campaign for labor law reform, which promotes the long-term objectives embodied in proposed federal legislation. The Employee Free Choice Act would establish union certification based on signed authorization cards, provide for arbitration in bargaining for first contracts, and increase penalties for employer unfair labor practice violations. As of November 1, 2006, the bill had been endorsed by 260 members of Congress—216 in the House of Representatives and 44 in the Senate (Sweeney, 2006).

The federation also has initiated an associate membership program, Working America, to establish a communication link to workers who support labor's political philosophy but who are not currently union members. Working America was created in the lead-up to the 2004 election with members recruited over the Internet and in door-to-door campaigns in targeted Congressional districts. There are currently more than 1.5 million subscribers (Sweeney, 2006). Like Voice@Work, this project is directly integral to the federation's political program. The most impressive aspect of the AFL-CIO's leadership role in the political arena is its extensive effort to influence the 2006 election, which is described below.

In addition to politics, another key AFL-CIO initiative is the formation of Industry Coordinating Committees (ICC) which are designed to coordinate bargaining and organizing activities among unions with substantial membership in a particular industry. The idea originally was suggested during the fight with CTW as an alternative to the mandatory mergers proposed by the dissident unions. There are currently three ICCs in operation, with another due to be approved early in 2007. The first ICC was formed in October 2005, bringing together eleven unions in the arts, entertainment, media, and information industries. The other ICCs are for eight unions representing nurses—RNs Working Together, formed in February 2006—and for ten unions of state and local government employees (formed in August 2006) (Hall, 2006; Lester, 2006). Although it is too early to assess the impact of ICCs, they provide a venue for strategic coordination and cross-fertilization thereby strengthening ties among AFL-CIO affiliates.

All three ICCs are making progress in their efforts to promote a cooperative approach to organizing. The arts and entertainment ICC has contracted with a research team at Cornell University to conduct an analysis of industry structure and trends and to develop profiles of key media conglomerates. The participating unions will rely on the analysis to identify organizing opportunities, which will provide the foundation for a coordinated organizing program. RNs Working Together hired an executive director in October to administer its program, and his immediate priority is to conduct an organizing assessment (Bank, 2006).

The most important aspect of the state and local government ICC's agenda is a targeted campaign to expand bargaining rights for public employees in states that do not have comprehensive labor laws. This ICC already has adopted a protocol for making jurisdictional decisions for new organizing which will facilitate rapid response in those states where labor was successful in the 2006 election. The highest priority will be to conduct large-scope strategic campaigns tied to expanded collective bargaining rights (Bank, 2006).

V. CTW Strategy 2006

CTW unions are fully committed to a growth agenda based on organizing. The approach they embrace emphasizes reallocation of resources on a grand scale away from other union activities and to recruitment. The participating unions have agreed that 75 percent of the CTW budget should be devoted to organizing and that each affiliate will maximize resources for organizing. Although what "maximize" implies about funding levels is not specified, CTW presidents hold each other accountable. Each union accepts responsibility for organizing in its own jurisdiction and is committed to a goal of net growth each year (Burger, 2006b). The CTW's primary role is to sponsor joint campaigns by pairs of affiliated unions and to initiate new projects that are too big for a single union. However, the CTW federation does not staff any campaigns, and in fact the federation is essentially a skeletal organization with "no bureaucracy" (Raynor, 2006).

The overriding strategy is to target for organizing activity only those industries that will remain in the United States, primarily in health care, hospitality, retail, building services, transportation, and construction. Current joint campaigns include SEIU and the Teamsters who are partnering to recruit school bus drivers, SEIU with UNITE-HERE in general services contracting, and the Teamsters with UNITE-HERE in industrial laundries. In addition, UFCW and UNITE-HERE are developing a retail apparel and distribution initiative, and it is anticipated that LIUNA and UBC will work together on major construction industry organizing. The best example of an initiative that is too large for any one union is Wake Up Wal-Mart, a public awareness offensive to highlight the leading retailer's excesses (Burger, 2006a, 2006b).

In order to promote full cooperation, the presidents of the unions hold bi-weekly conference calls and monthly meetings. In addition, the unions' organizing directors, campaign directors, and political directors meet regularly to share strategies and seek input on campaign planning. There is a high degree of energy, commitment, and excitement about working together to build market power through aggressive organizing. Although organizing is the top priority, the unions also support each other on major bargaining campaigns (Burger, 2006a). The depth of strategic coordination that appears to be emerging from the CTW is atypical and has not been seen in the United States since the early years of the CIO in the late 1930s.

The CTW also is trying to build global partnerships with unions in other countries in support of organizing where a key employer is a multinational corporation. Andy Stern of SEIU has established an informal global organizing alliance that includes key union leaders from at least a dozen countries (Stern,

2005b). This group meets every few months to explore areas of potential cooperation. Several CTW campaigns have global connections, including the school bus drivers' organizing which is targeting a British company, an IBT organizing effort with DHL, and SEIU/UNITE-HERE organizing in the general services industry.

There is consensus among CTW leaders that political action may pay dividends in the short term, especially if tied directly to strategic leverage to support specific campaigns or to pave the way for organizing. Although participating alongside the AFL-CIO nationally for the 2006 elections (as described below), the CTW is running its own field operations in several states in the hopes of electing labor-friendly governors. In addition, individual unions are aligning with candidates who have committed to take action that will facilitate organizing. For example, in 2006 UNITE-HERE has endorsed conservative Republicans in Florida and California who pledge to support organizing access to casinos (Raynor, 2006).

There have been no dramatic gains in the first year for CTW-initiated organizing, though there have been some victories for individual union campaigns that were already on track before the new federation was established. In November 2005 the SEIU concluded what appeared to be a major breakthrough by establishing representation rights for 5,000 janitors in Houston's commercial buildings (Greenhouse, 2005b). One year later the union was still locked in difficult negotiations for a first contract and was using various corporate campaign tactics to pressure the cleaning firms to reach a settlement (Hem, 2006). In what appears to be a more clear-cut victory, in the 2006 round of hotel industry bargaining UNITE-HERE secured national neutrality agreements with Hilton Hotels and Starwood, as well as separate neutrality language in contracts with hotel associations in several major cities, including New York, Chicago, and San Francisco (*Business Wire*, 2006; Raine, 2006; Rose, 2006). The union already has organized several of the full-service hotels covered by the agreements and anticipates adding 4,000 new members at 20 additional properties by Spring 2007 (Raynor, 2006).

There have been other successes for the CTW unions, but not of the magnitude anticipated when the organization was founded. Although the level of coordination across the unions has been impressive, there are real barriers to immediate results. One annoyance is the UBC's absence at most joint strategy sessions, though Doug McCarron does attend the CTW presidents' meetings. A more important challenge is the reality that the seven unions are at different stages in developing their organizing programs. As noted earlier, both the IBT and UFCW are just beginning to build a foundation for significant organizational transformation. The UFCW in particular is struggling, with little organizing capacity and a Herculean task ahead if it hopes to take on Wal-Mart and the other big-box stores. But UFCW has taken some initial steps with a committee for the future, a new organizing committee, and a commitment to restructuring (Meyerson, 2006; Burger, 2006b).

The IBT appears to be moving more quickly in the right direction, substantially expanding organizing capacity at the national level with 100 organizers and a new strategic research department. Several key campaigns are in progress: school bus drivers with SEIU, laundry workers with UNITE-HERE, DHL and FedEx drivers, and port truck drivers. The involvement of other CTW unions directly or indirectly in all of these campaigns is viewed as a real plus. There is full CTW support for the FedEx drivers and port truck drivers' initiatives because these workers are treated as independent contractors and thus present a special challenge (Meyerson, 2006; Burger, 2006b).

Even with the setbacks and frustrations, the leaders of the CTW unions continue to project optimism. As Andy Stern sees it, "The groundwork is being laid to do good things" (Meyerson, 2006). Bruce Raynor of UNITE-HERE is even more upbeat: "Yes the unions are at different places, but we have

tremendous solidarity. We support each other's campaigns. . . . The Teamsters are making tremendous progress. They will organize 100 thousand port truck drivers in the next two years" (Raynor, 2006).

VI. Political Action: The 2006 Elections

The two federations reached an agreement in May to coordinate activities for the 2006 elections. Anna Burger initiated discussions to explore the possibility of a merged political operation, but it was clear early on that the AFL-CIO would lead the effort. AFSCME President Gerald McEntee, chair of the AFL-CIO political committee, was named to head the joint National Labor Coordinating Committee which spearheaded the joint election campaign (Von Bergen, 2006).

The CTW still sees value in political action, especially if it is tied to organizing, but apparently has no interest in duplicating the AFL-CIO's political apparatus. As CTW spokesperson Carole Florman explains, "The core activity we need to be undertaking is strategic organizing, and the AFL is working more through the political process. We think that politics is important . . . but we don't have a stated goal [like the AFL-CIO] of electing a Democrat to Congress" (Lengell, 2006).

The AFL-CIO allocated \$40 million to the elections, the most ever for a nonpresidential year, which is particularly noteworthy given its streamlined budget overall. The federation staffed campaigns in 21 states, targeting 21 governors' races, 15 Senate races, and more than 50 House races (Elliott, 2006). By comparison, and consistent with its narrower approach to politics, CTW allocated limited federation resources while keying on only three races for governor—Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania (Burger, 2006b).

The field operations were closely integrated and involved members and locals affiliated with both federations; the only exception was Minnesota where the CTW state federation worked separately. In addition, the independent 2.7 million member National Education Association reached an agreement with the AFL-CIO early in 2006 to coordinate election activities (the agreement also opened the solidarity charter process to NEA locals) (Lengell, 2006). When asked on election day to describe how the joint campaign had worked in practice, AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Rich Trumka decried the reluctance of CTW national unions to share lists of members, but was unequivocal about cooperation at the local level: "The CTW and NEA were fully integrated. . . . It was seamless on the ground" (Trumka, 2006). The end result was rather amazing: In spite of the split, the U.S. labor movement conducted its most extensive and efficient electoral campaign ever. The AFL-CIO clearly earned credit for leading the joint effort.

Labor's grassroots mobilization concentrated on "drop-off voters," those union members who typically support labor-endorsed candidates but do not vote in midterm elections. The goal was to identify drop-off voters, then increase their turnout in order to enhance the potential for Democratic victories in close races (Moberg, 2006). In order to accomplish this, the objective was to increase substantially phone contacts, worksite contacts, and neighborhood walks in areas with high concentrations of union members (Knowles, 2006).

Labor also used two ventures to connect with nonunion workers. First, the AFL-CIO's associate membership program Working America was fully integrated in the field campaign, with volunteers from the association assisting in outreach and get-out-the-vote efforts. The 1.5 million members of Working America were at least as likely as union members to be contacted, and were targeted as a particularly important constituency in Ohio and Pennsylvania where the association's recruitment operation has been active since 2004 (Trumka, 2006). Second, both CTW and the AFL-CIO joined with advocacy and community groups to support ballot propositions to increase the minimum wage in six states: Arizona,

Colorado, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, and Ohio. The propositions passed in all six states, and were credited with increasing turnout among low-income workers likely to vote Democratic (Greenhouse, 2006c).

The scope of the ground campaign was unprecedented. A total of 205,000 members from AFL-CIO unions, CTW unions, and Working America worked as volunteers. They visited 8.25 million homes, distributed 14 million flyers, and made 30 million phone calls. In the four days before the election, 187,000 volunteers participated in labor's get-out-the-vote effort. In Ohio alone the campaign contacted almost 500,000 drop-off voters (Amber, 2006).

Post-election polls indicated that union households accounted for one in four voters and that they supported Democratic candidates for Congress by a three-to-one margin. With labor contributing what John Sweeney described as "the most powerful turnout engine on the progressive side" (Amber, 2006) the Democratic victory has at least confirmed labor's key role in the political process. There is little doubt that AFL-CIO leaders feel vindicated in their commitment to political action as a potential path to union revitalization.

VII. The Potential for Revitalization with a Divided Labor Movement

Labor's optimism in the immediate afterglow of the 2006 Democratic victory in Congressional elections is reminiscent of 1992. There were many in the AFL-CIO then who thought that President Clinton would deliver labor law reform, and that a rebound in union density was just around the corner. Unfortunately for unions, as Michael Kazin has observed, "the alliance [with the Democratic party] has never fulfilled the hopes of mainstream labor officials" (Kazin, 1999).

For CTW, experience with Democrats is reason not to pursue aggressively a political solution. As Bruce Raynor of UNITE-HERE describes it, "We believe that a Democratic president will not solve labor's problems" (Raynor, 2005). Thus the CTW's narrow approach to politics: support candidates regardless of political party based on commitments to deliver support for specific organizing initiatives, then go all out to assure follow through.

The AFL-CIO is more ambitious and at the same time recognizes the need to do more to hold Democrats accountable. With this in mind, the senior federation is engaged in a project to develop a progressive policy agenda. With labor support, the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) has assembled a team of 40 economists, organized in ten task forces, to design policy alternatives that challenge the neoliberal framework. The ultimate objective of the project (scheduled to go public in 2007) is to present to labor's political allies a progressive policy framework that benefits working families and unions (Levinson, 2006). The challenge for the AFL-CIO will be to use the EPI agenda to clarify expectations of elected officials who have benefited from labor's active electoral campaign support.

In the short term labor may realize some modest gains in the policy arena with the Democratic majority in Congress. However, the fate of labor law reform is predictable; the Employee Free Choice Act will pick up supporters, possibly even a majority in both houses, but not enough to overcome a certain Republican filibuster in the Senate. The long-term challenge, then, is to elect a sympathetic president in 2008 and add another five to ten labor-friendly senators, a long shot at best.

There may well be more short-term benefit from the election of labor-endorsed candidates at the state level, and both federations intend to be active in this arena. CTW unions expect action by new governors to aid organizing campaigns, for example among home health care and day care workers, casino employees, and port truck drivers. The AFL-CIO state and local government ICC will be looking for

opportunities to extend coverage of public sector bargaining laws in those states that elected labor-endorsed candidates for governor. Both federations then, will attempt to translate political success into membership growth.

On the organizing front, several individual AFL-CIO unions have committed substantial new funds to recruitment. Furthermore, the three ICCs have initiated dialogues that may set the stage for more effective organizing in their respective jurisdictions. Nonetheless, the best hope for immediate success lies with the CTW's coordinated organizing approach. Hotel Workers Rising has set the stage for immediate growth in the hospitality industry, and if other CTW campaigns can achieve similar results, the new federation will begin to gain momentum.

The AFL-CIO unions have moved beyond their initial distress with the split, and now need to build positive momentum that speaks to workers not attracted to the CTW industrial/sectoral framework. Public sector workers would likely prefer the type of political unionism that seems to be under construction. On another front, the expanding professional and technical workforce would be a natural fit with occupational unionism. Recognizing the potential, the AFL-CIO Department for Professional Employees has initiated strategic dialogue among its affiliates and through this process is exploring alternatives to traditional collective bargaining, as well as political options for addressing the workplace concerns of the growing contingent white-collar workforce. Ultimately, the future of the U.S. labor movement will depend not only on political advances and the fortunes of CTW's aggressive organizing program, but also on the ability of other unions to adapt to the twenty-first century with their own growth agenda. Ironically, it may well be competition between the two federations that creates the dynamic energy required to spur union revitalization.

Unfortunately, the future path is not clear and there are numerous obstacles to resurgence. Globalization, the hostile legal environment for private sector unions, and the broad neoliberal policies embraced by both U.S. political parties will combine to thwart many union initiatives. The AFL-CIO indeed has taken some initial steps to openly challenge the neoliberal agenda, and this will have to continue if labor hopes to push the Democratic Party to the left (Palley, 2006). Inside the labor movement there is still some danger that competition between the federations will degenerate into open warfare with raiding and, even more likely, an inability to coordinate strategy across the chasm. Finally, there is no evidence that the CTW growth agenda can succeed, since even those unions within the new federation that have been devoting substantial resources to organizing for over a decade (SEIU and UNITE-HERE) have had only modest success at increasing density in core jurisdictions. The newcomers to the strategic organizing framework, especially the Teamsters and the UFCW, need to go through a difficult period of radical organizational change in order to build the foundation for long-term growth.

In spite of the pitfalls, the current controversy has at least stirred unions into action. The U.S. labor movement continues to face the real possibility of irrelevancy and even extinction. The recent political success is a step in the right direction, but radical transformation still is crucial for labor movement revival. With the CTW serving as catalyst—or antagonist depending on your perspective—there is at least a possibility that unions will find a way to adapt and ultimately will create strategic approaches that deliver voice, power, and leverage in the context of the evolving global economy.

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