

POLITICAL BUREAU

NUMBER 21

January 13, 1975

Present: Barnes, A. Hansen, D. Jenness, Lovell, Miah, Seigle,  
Sheppard

Visitors: Camejo, L. Jenness, Rose, Scott

Chair: Hansen

AGENDA: 1. YSA Representative  
2. Coalition of Labor Union Women  
3. Steelworkers  
4. Teachers and Public Workers  
5. Defense of Spanish Political Prisoners  
6. National Committee Membership

1. YSA REPRESENTATIVE

Scott reported that the YSA NEC has elected Miah to be their member on the Political Committee and Political Bureau.

2. COALITION OF LABOR UNION WOMEN

L. Jenness reported on development of CLUW chapters and our participation (see attached).

Discussion

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

3. STEELWORKERS

Rose reported on discussions in St. Louis with steelworker comrades on their situations.

Discussion

4. TEACHERS AND PUBLIC WORKERS

Lovell reported (see January 10, 1975 Lovell correspondence)

Discussion

5. DEFENSE OF SPANISH POLITICAL PRISONERS

L. Jenness reported on possibilities for a demonstration and other activities in defense of Genovieve Forest, Lydia Falcon, and other Spanish political prisoners being framed on charges of complicity in the CarreroBlanco assassination.

Discussion

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

6. NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Sheppard reported on resignation from the party of National Committee member Joe Johnson for personal reasons.

Discussion

Motion: To take cognizance of Johnson's resignation and to inform Les Evans that as currently first alternate he automatically becomes a regular member of the National Committee.

Carried.

MEETING ADJOURNED

## Report on Coalition of Labor Union Women

by Linda Jenness, January 13, 1975

Over the past three or four months the CLUW chapters have been going through a process of getting charters to become official chapters, setting up a structure and by-laws, and electing their officers. Most of the internal life of CLUW has been consumed by this process. In most places that process has been a painful one, often pitting the union officials against the sectarians, making reach-out activities difficult, and minimizing attendance by rank-and-file independent women. Debates on such issues as whether CLUW should be open to non-union women, whether each steering committee has to have 50 percent rank-and-file women, etc., have come out in this discussion around the structure and by-laws.

That process is now over in many of the areas. They have their charter, have adopted a structure and by-laws, and have elected officers.

The CLUW chapters vary tremendously around the country, but they basically fall into three categories.

1) There are some chapters that have been destroyed, or almost destroyed, by the sectarians. The October League is in control, for instance, in Atlanta, Boston, and Denver. These chapters are very narrow and the union movement refuses to participate in them. (Some of these chapters have not been chartered yet and there are fights going on around whether or not they should be chartered.)

We tried to turn these chapters around but were unable to get the unions to participate and therefore couldn't broaden them out.

In these areas we have pulled back somewhat from the city-wide CLUW chapter. We stay on top of them but are not trying to build them or participate in them in a major way. The comrades in those areas felt that until there is some change -- until the unions begin participating -- that their time was much more constructively spent concentrating their efforts in their individual unions. They have been participating in union women's committees where they exist, and in some instances initiating such committees. We have had some success with this. In Atlanta a comrade is trying to help set up a women's committee in AFSCME. In Denver, a couple of comrades in the CWA and one in the NEA are trying to do this. We have found that some of our most fruitful work is done in these committees. The women who attend these meetings want to find out what their contract says; how to handle grievances; how to use parliamentary procedure; and they want to find out the facts and figures about their union and women's role in it. They want to have some educational forums. That's where we have made our best contacts and have been able to talk to women about our politics.

In Denver we decided to take the October League on around the question of the charter. That group had passed a by-law stating that Denver CLUW would build an "auxiliary" to CLUW composed of non-union women. This was simply a gimmick on OL's part to change the character of CLUW from a union women's organization to an organization open to non-union women, to bring in their non-union women to tighten their "control." A comrade of ours in Denver, who is a member of the National Coordinating Committee of CLUW, refused to sign the application for a charter for Denver CLUW and wrote a letter to Olga Madar stating why. (Copy enclosed.)

After Olga replied to the letter, agreeing that the Denver group did not have the same goals as outlined in the Statement of Purpose, the OL reversed the decision about the auxiliary. However, they then censored our comrade, whom they had previously expelled from the steering committee! The decision about Denver's charter will be made at the NCC meeting on Jan. 17-19 in St. Louis. Comrades should be clear on all the facts involved in this because OL will probably try to use it against us nationally.

2) The second category of CLUW chapters includes areas like Detroit, Chicago, and Philadelphia. The meetings in these areas are attended primarily by the union officials and the sectarians, with very few independents. But, unlike in the first category, the officials are still involved. In Detroit, for instance, Olga Madar attends the meetings, as does Addie Wyatt in Chicago. They are still very narrow.

In these areas also, particularly in Detroit, our comrades came to the conclusion that our most fruitful work was in their individual unions and in women's committees in the unions. After a thorough discussion in the branch, the comrades decided to spend more time in their individual unions and less in the city-wide apparatus, although they will keep on top of the city-wide developments and help where they can.

3) The third category of CLUW chapters are those that are much more real and broad. New York, Seattle, Los Angeles, Houston, Washington, D.C., and others. In these areas there are a significant number of unions that are really participating in CLUW. A lot of officials come to the meetings and are trying to help CLUW grow. There is a layer of independents, rank-and-file women of all ages. The sectarians in these areas play a more minor role compared to the other categories. (Even these areas vary.)

The best example is the CLUW chapter in New York. On January 8 they had their election of officers. The voting was based on the number of CLUW members present and voting, so everyone mobilized for the meeting in order to get delegates to the steering committee. This made it pretty clear what unions were there and really participating in CLUW. About 500 women attended this meeting. The UFT had 175-200 (including 15 or 20 men they dragged in for the vote); Local 1199 of the Hospital Workers had a sizable caucus; also District Councils 1707 and 37 of AFSCME. The Store Workers, ILGWU, and others had enough women present (20) to get a delegate on the steering committee. Screen Actors Guild, ITU, CWA, Newspaper Guild, and others, got together to form a "combined union caucus" because they did not have enough by themselves.

Even in New York, however, we are having more of our comrades concentrate their energy in the union women's committees. Some of our comrades have a good deal of authority in the city-wide apparatus of CLUW and are continuing to play that role. Others are spending more time in the union women's committees, particularly in 1199 and D.C. 1707. (We have found that both of these activities are time consuming and it's difficult for a comrade to do both.)

In summary, one lesson from our experience in CLUW during the last six months is the value of the work in the union women's committees. That is the place where we get to talk to the women in the most mean-

ingful way and bring them around us. These committees will be the base of CLUW in the long run.

It's also been in this way that we can do the best contact work and recruitment. This is an area that we must pay much closer attention to -- recruiting. Contact work and recruitment is done unevenly around the country. Some areas keep lists of the contacts and make sure that they are followed up, that they get a subscription to The Militant, etc. Other areas do it less consistently or just leave it up to the individuals doing CLUW work. Recruitment and contact work should be given consistent direction by the branch leadership in this area of work as well as others.

The most promising possibilities for CLUW right now are in the area of layoffs and unemployment. All the areas report a tremendous interest within CLUW from all the different layers -- starting with Olga Madar -- in doing something around the layoffs. Los Angeles CLUW passed a resolution saying that the fight against the layoffs should be a priority issue for CLUW and endorsing the Feb. 5 UAW march on Washington. The Chicago CLUW endorsed the Jan. 15 action for "Jobs for All." At the New York meeting a resolution was presented calling for CLUW to make the layoffs a priority issue and that proposal was met with enthusiasm. And we know that there are several proposals along these lines that will be presented to the NCC at its St. Louis meeting, Jan. 17-19.

If CLUW will orient toward working with other union organizations in building actions against the layoffs, this would help turn CLUW outward, out of these debates over structure and by-laws and officers. It would give CLUW a national focus. Our comrades in CLUW are suggesting that CLUW have educationals and conferences about the layoffs and how they affect women; put out some leaflets or pamphlets; reach out to other organizations to build some united activities.

After the NCC we will know a little better what is possible on this and will report it to the branches.

December 31, 1974

TO: Denver Area CLUW Organizing Committee

FROM: Joyce Newell, National Coordinating Committee member, N.E.A.

Dear Sisters,

Below is a copy of a letter I sent to Olga Madar regarding decisions made at the December 8 meeting.

I hope this information will help clarify some of the differences within Denver CLUW.

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December 31, 1974

Olga Madar, President  
Coalition of Labor Union Women  
8000 East Jefferson  
Detroit, Michigan 48214

Dear Olga,

As a member of the National Coordinating Committee of CLUW from the Denver area, I signed the application for a charter along with other women from the Denver Area Organizing Committee.

This application will be submitted for consideration by the National Coordinating Committee which is scheduled to meet in St. Louis on January 17-19. The Denver Area Organizing Committee for CLUW plans to finalize its by-laws and elect officers on January 5 and then submit the application.

I would like my name taken off the application because the by-laws adopted at the last Denver CLUW meeting are in conflict with the basic goals of CLUW and will hinder the possibilities of building CLUW into a powerful organization of union women fighting for our rights in the union, on the job, and in society as a whole.

On December 8 the third Denver CLUW meeting was held. This meeting was held to vote on the Denver CLUW by-laws and was attended by approximately 40 people, of which 26 were national members of CLUW. Only members of CLUW were allowed to vote. However, it was also voted by a majority of those present and voting that non-CLUW members, including non-union women, be allowed to have voice on the by-laws proposals.

The meeting proceeded to carry on the business of adopting the by-laws with non-CLUW members having voice. Under the "Admission and Membership" section of the by-laws a majority of the voting CLUW members (13 to 6) voted for a paragraph which reads as follows:

"There shall be established an auxilliary consisting of people who subscribe to the statement of purpose of the national but are not qualified for full membership. They shall have a voice but no vote in chapter business. All expenses they incur for auxilliary functions shall be their own responsibility. The auxilliary shall elect their own officers. The president of the auxilliary shall sit on the CLUW

executive board and shall have a voice but no vote on the board."

It seems obvious to me that for the Denver Area Organizing Committee to concern itself with building an auxiliary to CLUW, composed of non-union women, before there is a viable, strong CLUW chapter here is, at best, putting the cart before the horse. At worse it is an attempt to change the basic character of CLUW from that of a union women's organization into an organization open to both union and non-union workers.

I agree with the CLUW national convention decision approved by the overwhelming majority of the 3,200 women there that CLUW, in order to become an effective union organization, must be limited to union members. As it was pointed out at the convention, women are joining various organizations to fight for issues that will benefit women, and it is time for union women to organize themselves.

Organizing the unorganized working women into unions is a concern of all of us. But opening CLUW to non-union women does not automatically help solve this problem. The way CLUW can help unorganized women get into unions is by fighting for their leaderships to reach out to the unorganized women and get them under collective bargaining agreements. A major test facing the entire union movement is whether or not it will respond to the urgent need to organize the unorganized. Union women working within their unions can have a significant effect on the outcome of this challenge. That is one of the reasons why a powerful union women's organization is needed.

Other CLUW chapters have settled the question of membership in a realistic and reasonable manner. In New York, for instance, the policy was clarified by Connie Kopelov, Chairwoman of the Structure Committee, in the N.Y. CLUW newsletter, Vol. 1, No. 4. N.Y. CLUW membership is open to all union women and membership is required in order to vote and participate. "Certainly," explains Kopelov, "under this section women in organizing drives or unions we are trying to recruit to CLUW can come to committee or membership meetings. We want them to do so. They can't vote or take part in debate which precedes a vote, but otherwise they can participate, work, observe. Policy-making is reserved for members alone."

This policy is quite different than what was adopted here in Denver. For one thing, NYCLUW is getting off the ground as a real union women's organization with many unions participating and a relatively large membership. Even this initial process has not taken place in Denver.

Secondly, the NY by-laws make it clear that non-union women, and non-CLUW members, do not decide policy. In Denver, the proposed auxiliary members would influence policy.

Even though the AFL-CIO regional director J.D. Patrick has cooperated with the Denver CLUW Organizing Committee, the leaderships of the Denver Area Labor Federation and the Colorado Labor Council have been reluctant to work with Denver CLUW as it is presently constituted. In my opinion, this is because the union leadership here sees CLUW, not as a union women's organization that aims to work with and through the unions, but as a workers organization that is trying to compete with the unions.

I feel that non-union women can play an important role in supporting CLUW. CLUW should collaborate, for instance; with other organizations and individuals on issues we agree with. However, the emphasis right now must be on building CLUW within the unions. CLUW cannot grow if it tries to by-pass or go around the unions. The unions are the base of CLUW.

It also seems to me that the women who feel the need to include non-union women at this time should take the question to the next national convention, or at least to the next National Coordinating Committee; instead of trying to make the decision on a local basis. The entire national membership of CLUW established the policy of limiting membership to union women and it should be that same national membership which discusses, and decides whether or not to change that decision.

In sisterhood,

Joyce Newell

Enc. (2)

cc: Denver CLUW Organizing Committee



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Coalition of Labor Union Women  
8000 E. Jefferson Avenue  
Detroit, Michigan

January 8, 1975

Joyce Newell  
Denver, Colorado

Dear Joyce:

I couldn't agree with you more. I will convey the information about removal of your name from the charter request application to Linda Tarr-Whelan, Secretary. I have asked Linda to assume responsibility for reviewing charter request applications and coordinating the procedures in issuing the charters.

A communication has been sent by the Officers of the Coalition of Labor Union Women to members of the National Coordinating Committee and State Convenors stating that observers were not permitted to participate in policy-making decisions of Coalition Chapters. I do not believe that the action of the participants of the Denver Chapter on the meeting of December 8 was consistent with Statement of Purpose and the Structure and Guidelines adopted at the Founding Conference. As President of the Coalition and a member of the Steering Committee, I will vote in opposition to the granting of the Charter until there has been a resolution of the situation.

May I suggest to you that you continue to participate in local Chapter activities and on the National Coordinating Committee, espousing the procedures and the views which you so eloquently express. I, too, will continue to do the same thing.

If we cannot achieve what we so successfully initiated in Chicago through the channels in which we are now working, we will find another way. We, however, cannot permit the minority to change the direction that the 3,200 women at the Founding Conference in Chicago wish to pursue.

Sincerely,

s/Olga M. Madar  
President

OMM:sm  
opeiu42  
cc: CLUW Officers

January 11, 1975

Olga M. Madar  
President  
Coalition of Labor Union Women  
8000 E. Jefferson Avenue  
Detroit, Michigan

Dear Olga:

Thank you for your prompt reply to my letter of December 31, 1974. Following your reply I received a call from your secretary on January 10, 1975. She asked me to put in writing the decisions of the January 5 meeting. They are as follows:

At the January 5 Denver Area CLUW Organizing Committee meeting attended by 17 CLUW members, the floor was opened to a discussion on my letter to you of December 31.

The position for an auxiliary was discussed and reversed. A motion was passed unanimously to delete the auxiliary from the by-laws. I feel strongly that my letter was crucial in bringing about the change. It was a necessary change in order for CLUW to become a viable organization for union women.

Unfortunately there were also some motions made at this meeting which reveals to me that no fundamental change has occurred in the leadership's attitude toward building CLUW.

The acting chairperson of the Denver Area CLUW Organizing Committee made a motion to censure me for sending the December 31 letter to CLUW members in advance of the January 5 meeting. Also included in the motion was a proposal to send the NCC of CLUW a letter explaining the censure. The Colorado State Convenor amended the motion to expel me from all Denver Area activities and meetings. The amendment was defeated by 10-5. The motion to censure was carried 12-2.

It is, of course, illogical to me that after the group agreed with me that the auxiliary was an obstacle to building CLUW and reversed that decision, that I then should be censured for bringing about the change. We cannot build CLUW by censoring CLUW members (from) participating in CLUW.

I would like to participate in the local Chapter, but I felt that the constant threats of expulsion and acts of censure (Another CLUW member was censured from the steering committee some months ago and I was expelled from the steering committee recently.) prohibit building a healthy Chapter that can unify union women around the CLUW Statement of Purpose.

If we cannot build a Chapter here that allows for an open and democratic atmosphere, then CLUW, in my opinion, will not grow. It will remain a narrow group of individuals without any influence or strength to carry out the goals of CLUW.

In sisterhood,  
Joyce Newell  
National Coordinating Committee member from N.E.A.