

LABOR EDUCATION PROGRAM

"Labor is prior to, and independent of, capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor, and could never have existed if Labor had not first existed. Labor is superior to capital, and deserves much the higher consideration."
 - Abraham Lincoln

LABORLINE NEWSLETTER

INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT / COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

LEP Partners with AFGE and PACE

Developing strong and effective local union leadership is one of the most important challenges unions face. With layoffs hitting union membership hard, many international unions are increasing their commitment to organizing, but have fewer resources to service locals. More responsibility is being placed on the locals to service the membership, and to run, build, and grow the local.

Recently Mike Kelly, AFGE District 9 National Vice President (Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas and Oklahoma) along with Chuey Sanchez, AFGE National Representative, asked the Labor Education Program to assist in developing and teaching a leadership program for the District. Designed specifi-

cally for local union officers, classes will be offered in the areas of union administration, union building, labor history, politics, and economics. The leadership program is structured with tracks for first and second year delegates. Those completing the program will receive an AFGE/LEP leadership certificate. Plans are to launch the program in Spring 2004.

Similarly, PACE International Representative Barry Strange approached LEP with the need for a leadership program for PACE locals in Arkansas. Covering many of the same areas as the AFGE program but tailored for the needs of PACE locals, plans are to launch the program in February 2004.

- Diane Thomas-Holladay

Upcoming Seminars

- **6th Annual Presidents' School**
January 30-31, 2004

Spring 2004

- **Strategic Grievance Handling**
- **Writing Effective Contract Language**

All union members are invited.

All seminars are presented in cooperation with the Arkansas AFL-CIO and are held in the Little Rock area. Details of an upcoming seminar is enclosed.

UPCOMING SEMINARS

January 30-31, 2004 **6th Annual Presidents' School**

Spring 2004 **Strategic Grievance Handling**
Writing Effective Contract Language

LEP course descriptions and services can be found on the LEP web site at <http://www.iea.ualr.edu/lep>
 For more information call the LEP office at 501-569-8483

Newsletters Yes!

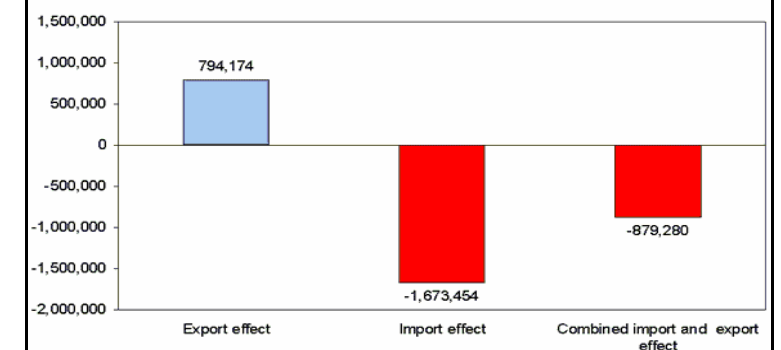
LEP strongly encourages all locals to produce newsletters, and this course offers a fabulous opportunity to learn how to draft a newsletter. And, for those locals who have been using newsletters, to hone and improve their skills! LEP regularly offers newsletter classes. Last spring LEP conducted its local union newsletter class in one of the new Reynolds building computer labs.



Attendees at LEP's 2003 newsletter training class. Watch for announcements for future newsletter classes or contact us for information.

Common Sense Economics

Jobs gained or lost due to U.S. NAFTA trade, 1993-2002



Source: EPI analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics and Census Bureau data.

NAFTA is a free trade and investment agreement that provides investors with a unique set of guarantees designed to stimulate foreign direct investment in Mexico and Canada. The Economic Policy Institute recently analyzed data from the U.S. Department of Labor and the Census Bureau and found that between 1993 and 2002, NAFTA resulted in a nationwide increase in exports that created 794,194 jobs, but it displaced production that would have supported 1,673,454 jobs (see figure). Through the year 2000, it is estimated that Arkansas lost 9,615 jobs as a result of NAFTA, mostly from the manufacturing sector, with lumber and wood products and electrical and electronic machinery, equipment and supplies accounting for nearly one third of the loss. (EPI, *Economic Snapshots*, December 10, 2003; and Robert Scott, *NAFTA's Impact on the States*, April 2001.)

The National Labor Relations Act (Private Sector)

The National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), enforced by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), protects stewards acting in their representational and union roles. Section 7 and 8 (a)(1) are the sections of the law most commonly cited in defense of stewards and as the basis for their representational rights.

Section 7 protects employees in their rights to:

- Form, join, or assist labor organizations
- Bargain collectively
- Engage in concerted activities

Section 8 (a)(1) states that it shall be an unfair labor practice for an employer to interfere, restrain, or coerce employees in their exercise of rights guaranteed under Section 7.

Talking Union in the Workplace

Under the NLRA, employees, stewards, and union officers are allowed to talk about the union in the workplace and to solicit union membership on non-work time, which means any time the worker is not expected to be working. Considered oral solicitation, this can be done in work areas or non-work areas. If workers are allowed to talk about other subjects then they have the right to talk union as long as it doesn't interfere with production.

Wearing Buttons, T-Shirts, Hats, etc.

Union activists have the legal right to wear buttons, T-shirts, hats, etc. in the workplace in support of the union's position on grievances or contract negotiations, or as a means for communicating with members. This right can be limited if it interferes with production, is a safety hazard, or violates a uniform code.

Distribution of Literature

Union activists have the legal right to distribute union newsletters, negotiation updates, flyers etc. in **non-work areas on non-work time**. Such literature must be about the concerns of the union and cannot be purely political literature or campaign materials (although newsletter articles that discuss political issues and candidate endorsements are protected). **Non-work areas** include restrooms, break areas, lunch rooms, parking lots, etc. **Non-work time** includes breaks, lunchtime, before and after work (paid lunches or breaks are considered non-work time).

Petitioning in the Workplace

The right of employees to circulate petitions that deal with working conditions (including supporting contract negotiations positions and grievances) are protected by the NLRA. Petitioning is considered solicitation, the same as soliciting for union membership. Petitioning can be done any time you are not required to be working. Both the petitioner and the person being asked to sign must be on non-work time. In most workplaces, petitioning can be done in **work areas** or **non-work** areas. However, passing out fact sheets explaining the petition is considered distribution of literature and must be confined to **non-work time in non-work areas**.

Labor Education Program

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WSEP Works to Improve Education

The quality of education in Arkansas has been an on-going challenge for many years. Issues of academic standards, system accountability, educational inequities, and consolidation are all part of a complex problem that has recently garnered increased attention due to the *Lakeview* decision. In one effort to confront these issues, the Workplace Skills Enhancement Program (WSEP), an arm of LEP, is assisting the Arkansas Department of Workforce Education (DWE) to update and improve high

school vocational education programs statewide.

WSEP reviewed curriculum content frameworks for each vocational program, linking them, where possible to a national or industry standard for knowledge and performance. Where standards were lacking, industry and union representatives reviewed the proposed standards. WSEP identified academic skills required to perform a vocational skill for each training program through the development of an educational matrix that linked complimentary aca-

demical skills to vocational skills.

Teachers will use these frameworks as a source document to guide the development of their curriculum. All 56 Technical and Professional frameworks have been updated and will soon be available to vocational educators statewide. A future project between WSEP and DWE is being discussed where test bank questions for selected programs will be reviewed and updated to ensure effective evaluation of student performance.

- Michael Gerfen



Grainger Ledbetter Takes New

Grainger Ledbetter, Labor Education Specialist with LEP for the past five years, has taken the position of Executive Director for his home local, the Little Rock Classroom Teachers Association. Grainger is a former president of the local and led it in a successful strike in the mid 1980s.

Anyone who had Grainger as an instructor or requested technical assistance from him knows what an excellent job he did for LEP and the labor movement. He will continue to do that fine work in his new capacity, and we wish him well.

Defending Immigrants' Rights Protects Everybody

Immigrant rights issues are an important focus for the national labor movement as well as the Arkansas AFL-CIO. The aim is to protect vulnerable workers from abuse and uphold workplace standards that organized labor has struggled to win over the years.

Lucia Hernandez, Director of the Northwest Arkansas Workers Center, explains that it is not easy to reach out to immigrant workers, "They are really afraid they will lose their jobs, or worse, if they speak up." Through community outreach and educational programs, Ms. Hernandez has been educating Spanish-speaking community members about laws affecting their employment and how to protect against potential employer retaliation. With the aid of LEP, labor unions, church groups, AR-COSH and other worker advocate organizations the Workers Center has helped resolve many complaints.

The complaint led to a "midnight" inspection of the plant, where serious health hazards were brought to light. She shared this and other related experiences at a rally welcoming the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride on its stop at Central High School in Little Rock this past September.



(l.to r.) Lucia Hernandez, Director, NW AR Workers' Center with fellow steering committee members, Susanna Brinnon, Professor Steve Striffler and Kristi Sanford, National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice.

Recently Ms. Hernandez, assisted workers in filing an OSHA complaint after they described dangerous conditions at a poultry processing plant.

In Houston, TX the Harris County AFL-CIO Labor Council and other worker advocate organizations and agencies are forming a local committee on workplace safety and health, or COSH group. "Houston is really a border town," explains Richard Shaw, secretary-treasurer of the Council, "and the city is circled by small manufacturers employing immigrant workers, often in sub-standard working conditions."

With support from the National COSH Network and LEP, the new Houston COSH group aims to find ways of reaching out to those and other vulnerable workers in Houston.

-Tom Karson