

LABOR LE EDUCATION PROGRAM

You gain strength, courage, and confidence by each experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say yourself, "I have lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along."

Eleanor Roosevelt

LABORLINE NEWSLETTER

INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT

SPRING 2002 SPECIAL TOPIC SEMINARS

4th Annual Local Union Presidents' School

January 25 and 26, 2002

Creating a Local Union Website

March 9, 2002

Workplace Safety and Health

April 26 and 27, 2002

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 upcoming seminars are enclosed.

From the Director



One of the first reports of estimated casualties in the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center came from the president of the NYC firefighters union. That evening, he told reporters that 250 firefighters were missing.

The loss has since risen to more than 350. Father Mychal Judge, the firefighter chaplain who died giving last rites to a victim, was a member of AFSCME DC 37, Local 299. Members of AFT, CWA, FOP, HERE, IBEW, IAM, OPEIU, SEIU, and various building trades were also among the victims that day - many of them giving their lives trying to save others. The pilots and flight attendants of the hijacked airliners were all union members.

In addition to the horrendous loss of life, hundreds of thousands of workers face layoffs in the airline, hotel and restaurant industries. Many economists are predicting that the attack will push us into an immediate recession, which could lead to massive layoffs throughout the economy.

As we mourn the death and destruction, we must be thankful for the incredible bravery and selfless acts of thousands of union brothers and sisters during and after the attacks. Let us hope that our nation can emerge strong and compassionate as it faces the profound challenges that lie ahead. **- Diane Thomas-Holladay**

Immigrants and the Labor Movement: An Important Relationship

The United States has often been called a "nation of immigrants." Throughout history, immigrants have provided members, activists, and leaders for the American labor movement. In recognition of these contributions, as well as the many weaknesses in the current immigration system, the AFL-CIO has recently reaffirmed its commitment to reforming that system.

According to an Executive Council Statement issued by the AFL-CIO in July 2001, greater emphasis should be placed on punishing employers who exploit illegal immigration for commercial gain, while at the same time protecting all workers' rights under the National Labor

Relations Act. This is an issue that will be in the public eye, as both the White House and Congress appear poised to push serious changes in immigration law.

Most immigrants come to the United States legally, add about \$10 billion dollars to the U.S. economy, and pay approximately \$33 billion in taxes. According to 1990 and 2000 US Census Data, the Hispanic population in Arkansas has grown a remarkable 337% in the last decade and approximately 61% in the last year alone, placing us at the top of the national growth rate for Hispanic residents. Unfortunately, current immigration laws encourage employers to exploit workers' fears and further

depress wages for all workers, both foreign and domestic.

For example, in October 1999 a Minnesota hotel reported eight undocumented Mexican workers after they voted for union representation. After a long legal battle before the INS and National Labor Relations Board, seven of these workers were allowed to stay in the United States. Also, employers use the "guest-worker" program to hire immigrant workers with no immediate hope of gaining legal status, while they work at depressed wage levels. Such a practice, prevalent in low-skill jobs, drives down wages for all workers in this country.

- Carl Bush

For more information on the AFL-CIO's effort to secure immigrants legal and workplace rights check out www.aflcio.org

Steward's Corner

Rights to Information

Obtaining Information Held by Management...A Union Right (Part 1)

The National Labor Relations Act gives unions broad access to certain management information they need to carry out their responsibility to bargain and enforce collective bargaining agreements. Under the law, employers have an obligation to provide unions with employee documents, factual information and data that relates to wages, hours and other terms and conditions of employment. An employer that fails to provide a union information, or unreasonably delays the transmission of information, violates Section 8 (a) (5) of the NLRA.

It is important to note that only the union and its representatives, not individual employees, are entitled to this information. Stewards do not need permission from employees to see records that pertain to them (unless employee records are deemed private, such as medical records or aptitude tests).

As a steward, you may request information from management necessary to:

- investigate a potential grievance
- prepare a grievance case
- decide whether to drop or pursue a grievance
- decide whether to arbitrate a case
- prepare for arbitration

Examples of management records and documents that the NLRB and/or the courts require to be provided to unions upon request include, but are not limited to:

- accident reports
- attendance records
- bargaining notes
- contracts (e.g. subcontractor)
- correspondence
- disciplinary records
- employer memos
- inspection records
- insurance policies
- interview notes
- job assignment records
- job descriptions
- payroll records
- personnel files

Management must also respond to more extensive inquiries relevant to a union's representational duties. For example, any union investigating a subcontracting case can obtain the contractor's name, a description of the work to be done, a copy of the contract with the subcontractor, and any relevant correspondence. If discrimination is an issue, unions are entitled to a copy of the employer's affirmative action plan, a breakdown of the workforce by race and gender, a list of employees promoted in the past, and the names of all those denied promotions. - **Grainger Ledbetter**

LEP courses and services can be found on the LEP web site at: <http://www.aiea.ualr.edu/lep>

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Spanish-speaking workers at Quality Foods

WSEP Teaches Life Skills at Quality Foods

The Workplace Skills Enhancement Program recently completed a customized training program for Hispanic, Spanish-speaking workers at Quality Foods, a food distribution plant in Little Rock, Arkansas. The program, which included over 48 hours of classroom instruction, emphasized critical communication skills such as identifying months, days of the year, colors, and numbers; using question words such as Who, What, Where, etc.; identifying health concerns and talking with a doctor or emergency personnel; shopping and eating in a restaurant; and basic grammar.

The unit also focused on teaching participants the English names for the equipment and food products they handle and helping them speak more effectively with supervisors and coworkers. Some participants, although they had been in the US less than one month, showed significant gains in their language skills. WSEP was proud to help these new citizens settle into their lives in Arkansas and hopes to continue with similar projects in the future. - **Laura Miller**

New Committee for Occupational Safety and Health (ARCOSH) to Provide Support for Local Unions

A state-wide Committee for Occupational Safety and Health (ARCOSH) has recently been formed in Arkansas. ARCOSH joins many such COSH groups around the nation which support local union safety committees and promote worker safety.

Through ARCOSH, union members can:

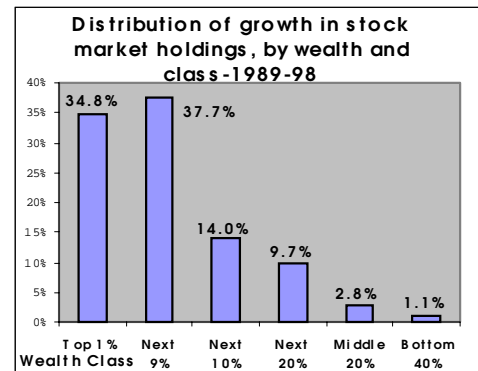
- meet with other local union safety representatives in their area
- strengthen their union safety committee
- evaluate their employer's safety program
- learn about workplace safety issues
- support workplace safety for all workers

The Committee currently has members and representatives from several international unions and central labor councils and has the support of the Arkansas Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice and the Arkansas AFL-CIO. Union members in surrounding states are also encouraged to join in ARCOSH activities.

Tom O'Connor, Director the National Network of Committees on Occupational Safety and Health, visited ARCOSH members in Little Rock earlier this year to offer guidance and support. The National Network is providing funds to the Labor Education Program through an OSHA grant to support the development of ARCOSH and to provide basic OSHA rights information to "vulnerable" workers including students, non-English speakers, and low-wage workers. - **Tom Karson**

To add your name to the ARCOSH mailing list, please contact:
Tom Karson, Labor Education Program, UALR, 2801 S. University, Little Rock, AR 72204; phone: 501-569-8483; e-mail: tdkarson@ualr.edu.

Common Sense Economic FACTS



Source: The Economic Policy Institute, *The State of Working America 2000-01*
www.epinet.org/books/swa2000/graph1214.html

72.5% of the growth in stock market holdings during the boom years of the 90's benefited the wealthiest 10% of Americans. During the same period, the bottom 60% of households received only 3.9% of the rise in the overall value of stockholdings.

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SPRING 2002

***REGISTRATION FORMS ENCLOSED FOR THESE UPCOMING
SEMINARS***

January 25-26, 2002 **4th Annual Local Union Presidents' School:
Dealing with the Labor/Management Relationship in a
Changing Workplace**

March 9, 2002 **Creating a Website for Your Local Union**

April 26-27, 2002 **The Union's Role in Workplace Safety and Health**