

2/18/86

The meeting was opened by Mary Lehman, NYSSILR, and she introduced Jim Morrisette, outgoing chair of the Labor Coalition. He reviewed the activities of the Coalition over the last three years, including the Labor Day Rallies, meetings with county legislative representatives, the Labor Film series, the resolution opposing apartheid in South Africa, and the Plant Closing legislation. He also said that the key word in the Coalition's future is participation: that unions should be able to come to the Coalition for help, and other unions should support the Coalition's efforts to aid them. In other words, the organized labor movement in our area should present a united front through the Coalition. Other issues the Coalition should become involved in are daycare, so working people can have a safe and healthy place to take their children while they work; unemployment; further work on the plant closing bill; our proposed Labor Newsletter; and conversion from wartime to peacetime economy.

Ed Ritchie, the Business Agent for Painters' Local #178, then addressed the question of how the Building Trades feel about the Coalition. Many tradespeople seem to feel that too much of the Coalition's time has been devoted to "good, noble causes" which seem to be peripheral, concerning issues which are not directly in the interest of our area workers. While the Coalition should not entirely neglect such issues just to attract tradespeople, there is only so much energy in one organization and it should be directed more towards local issues which can be directly affected--such as the plant closing bill. He also stressed that all of us should try harder to buy union-made products, or at least American made. The government is obviously not going to do it for us, he said, since U.S. banks have loaned so much money to foreign interests that they are trapped into protecting their investments. He particularly stressed the plight of the domestic garment industry.

A round table discussion followed, led by Al Davidoff, UAW #2300, concerning the purposes, goals, and issues of the Coalition. Charlie French, IBEW #241, said that he saw the Coalition's purposes as a means of helping one another, understanding the problems of other unions, and aiding them. Jim Morrisette wondered why unions did not come to our meetings to present their concerns and tell us what we can do to help them; perhaps it is incumbent upon the Coalition to go to them. Perhaps we should send a rep. to various union meetings, talk about the Coalition, and ask what we can do to help. Al Davidoff proposed having three or four people go to different union meetings and speak. Haralyn Kuckes commented that it may not be practical to go to all union meetings, and that it should not be too much to ask for each union to send a representati

who would return to disseminate information to the local. Howard Loveless said that some issues we should concern ourselves with should be bread-and-butter issues like wages, conditions, incentives to work, etc. Jim Morrisette suggested that we could also be a kind of clearinghouse for local contracts. Al Davidoff advocated putting together a local union directory which lists local unions, officers, addresses, etc. Charlie French added that due to the Building Trades Internationals' recent computerization, some unions could find out where their pension monies are invested, and earmark them for such things as union construction projects.

The Plant Closing bill is presently in a six-man committee which is waiting for two resource people--Dick Matthews of Morse-Borg Warner and Steve Jackson of the Planning Committee-- to bring back a report on how plant closing bills have worked in other places. The bill was a major issue in the recent mayoral campaign, with the opposition vigorously attacking the bill, and the incumbent, who defended it, winning by a landslide. That would seem to ~~xxxx~~ indicate that people in the area are in favor, or at least not frightened by, the bill, and that the mayor should be more strenuously pursuing the bill than he is. A brochure about the bill is being put together Mike Cohen and Steve Jackson, and should be available for distribution soon. Ed Ritchie suggested that each local run off copies of a form letter and have their members and members' spouses sign them and send them to the mayor's office, promoting the bill by sheer weight of numbers with old-fashioned unionism tactics.

The Labor Newspaper will be used to provide visible evidence of what the Coalition is doing and be a forum for labor as opposed to the anti-union local newspapers. The actual physical making of the paper will also help to build excitement and bring people together. First we create a model paper, to see what people think of it. We need articles from the various unions, photographs, cartoons, etc.

Nominations for steering committee will be open at the March 11 meeting.

A Discussion of dues followed, with Haralyn Kuckes, ITA, suggesting that dues be lowered to convince more locals to join. Skye Milliman, Painters 178, opposed this, stressing the need for funds for various projects and aiding local unions. Al Davidoff, UAW #2300, proposed that dues be put off for four to six months, during which time we will conduct extensive outreach and publication efforts, hoping that by the time we do send out dues notices, the Coalition will be more in the public eye and unions will be more informed about us and will wish to join. General consensus supported this last alternative. Meeting adjourned for munchies and mingling.