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Labor Education for Women Workers

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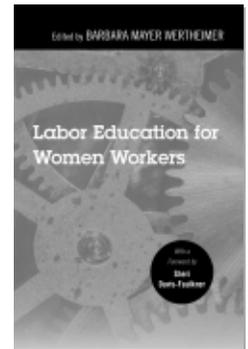
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DESIGNING PROGRAMS

A remarkable group of women educators and reformers laid the foundation for labor education as we know it today. Thus Labor Education for Women Workers opens with an historical review of their contributions, the pilot programs they developed to meet the needs of women wage earners from the early years of the twentieth century to the eve of World War II. Their innovations in curriculum design and methodology, plus their use of labor advisory committees, are still considered basic to labor education program efforts. In an age that seeks to learn about its roots, these are roots that labor and adult educators will recognize as their own.

Yet in spite of these beginnings, women remain underrepresented in most labor education programs, in part because they are underrepresented in leadership and are not always recruited when conferences, workshops, and courses are offered. Reaching them is not always easy, but Chapter 2 suggests some ways program planners can accommodate the scheduling needs of working women and can utilize communications channels to recruit them. The author is sensitive to the fact that even today programs on or for union women may be viewed as threatening, discusses this, and offers constructive suggestions to deal with the problem.

Five kinds of program structures are discussed in as many chapters, constituting a "how to" blueprint for the adult and workers' education specialist. Each chapter deals with one framework within which to set programs for union women: short courses tailored to particular student interests and needs; day-long conferences that bring together women from a wide geographic area; long-term programs that focus on special training needs, in this instance a case study of flight attendants who sought union adminis-

PART I

tration skills; evening college credit programs for union women that include a progression of paired courses in labor studies and leadership training; and week-long schools for union women that provide a shared residential experience.

Part I concludes with a description of the uses and methodology of program evaluation. This chapter demonstrates how evaluation has evolved from "informal" to "formative" and how it is utilized with increasing effectiveness at the Northeastern Regional Summer Schools for Union Women, held annually since 1976. A strong case is made for labor education in particular, and adult education in general, to develop wider and more effective use of evaluation as a tool in program design.