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Labor Education for Women Workers

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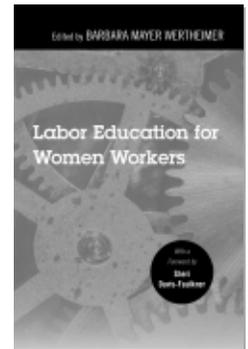
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SUBJECTS AND MATERIALS

The book turns next from methods and techniques in labor education to subjects and materials. The range of subjects taught in classes for workers, and more recently in special programs for working women, is too great to be covered in one brief volume. However, a representative selection has been made, and labor educators who have developed a special expertise or innovative program in these areas have been invited to contribute chapters.

The first four chapters of Part III describe subject areas and course content. To the extent possible within the limitations of space, course outlines, case examples, or sample program formats have been included.

Labor history comes alive through field trips, a method expanded on in Chapter 13. After reading about how these programs have been successfully funded, educators will want to watch for opportunities to apply for State Humanities Council funds for projects in this area, where their states make grants available.

Women workers need to understand the political process in order to act in it effectively. Chapter 14 discusses several ways to teach this subject, and suggests some useful course structures and formats as well as topical material to include. The goal is increased involvement of women in the process at every level.

The chapter that follows focuses on grievance handling, a subject widely taught in labor education. The author uses several cases drawn from her own experience as a union leader, and indicates both the need for providing training for women stewards, and some problems unique to women workers

PART III

that can be remedied through union grievance procedures. These make rich course material.

A field of growing concern to all workers is that of occupational health and safety. Women workers, the authors of Chapter 16 find, are more likely to open up and discuss their concerns in this area in courses, workshops, or conferences where women participate in substantial numbers, which means where special efforts have been made to recruit them and to address their needs. Several formats for structuring programs around women's OSHA concerns are suggested.

Chapter 17 turns to ways of using union structures themselves to develop education around union efforts in affirmative action. The authors analyze how women's departments in two major international unions are integrated into overall union affirmative action policies and how education programs are shaped to carry these out. University labor education centers can reach out to assist wherever possible in the programs that unions such as these develop. Affirmative action, more than a contract clause that, when enforced, advances women on the job, also increases women's participation in the union at a variety of leadership levels.

The next chapter discusses how to choose and use materials in education for women workers. In combination with the Appendix on resources, prepared by the same author, this provides the reader with a wealth of suggestions and information immediately practical, utilitarian, and applicable to a multitude of program needs and situations.

Chapter 19 deals with an essential subject: how to handle controversial issues. It provides a program model based on the issue of the Equal Rights Amendment, and takes up as well the question of how to integrate women's issues into ongoing union programs and concerns.