

Expertise Needed: Inter-Union and Federation-Level Organizing: New and Forgotten Methods

Posted on April 17, 2013 by Rosemary Feurer

The AFL-CIO has formed a committee of labor historians to prepare a document to help them think about the future of organized labor. Confirmed committee members include: Julie Greene, University of Maryland; Michael Kazin, Georgetown University; Nelson Lichtenstein, UC Santa Barbara; Bethany Moreton, University of Georgia; Christian Sweeney, AFL-CIO; and Heather Thompson, Temple University. The committee chair is Daniel Katz, Dean of the National Labor College.

The AFL-CIO is looking for historical examples of inter-union and/or federation-level cooperation in organizing unions. Officers and staff are open to lessons of failures as well as success, and they are open to listening to healthy debate over differing interpretations of those moments. They have begun thinking about the Steel Workers Organizing Committee and Operation Dixie as examples. Many of the AFL-CIO leaders, including Rich Trumka, read scholarly labor history. Recently, Sue Cobble's article "Lost Ways of Organizing: Reviving the AFL's Direct Affiliate Strategy" made its way around the DC headquarters.

We invite you to submit short essays of up to 500 words to help the committee synthesize the currents of our profession. We ask that as you write you consider that the essays will be most effective if they have the following qualities: 1) Focus right away on a concrete event, strategy or campaign 2) Written clearly for an educated but general audience 3) Is explicit about what the lessons are for current or future efforts 4) Does not disparage other points of view.

While the final report will be short and can not include many ideas, AFL-CIO staff and officers will have access to these posts. Feel free to add to current discussion threads, or start a new one.

To contribute, navigate to <https://lawcha.org/discuss/>

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