

For Discussion at General Assembly

Non-Profit Foundation Proposal

During the weekend of May 28, 2005, some of the individuals involved with the Organizer Training Committee meeting met to discuss the possibility of starting a non-profit foundation. In attendance were: John Baranski, Alexis Buss, Jim Crutchfield, Desiree Schell, Manish Vaidya, and Adam Welch.

Those discussions centered on forming a foundation that will complement the existing work being undertaken by the IWW, and allow us to receive funding we would otherwise be unable to access. In the past, collection of some donations has been impaired due to the difficult and time consuming process of establishing links with other organizations willing to “loan” us their charitable status in order for us to provide tax receipts. In addition, there are foundations that would readily support our training efforts if given the opportunity. A not-for-profit foundation, with 501(c)(3) status, will allow us to receive and efficiently process donations that the IWW cannot, and will enable us to apply for grants that are unavailable to non-charity organizations.

The foundation’s structure would have the following characteristics:

Mission

The Workers’ Education Foundation’s mission will help increase the capacity of workers to transform their workplaces and their communities through providing education, training, and research.

Objectives

1) To offer training sessions on leadership development and workplace organizing; 2) To provide funding to participants wishing to access training; 3) To communicate the spirit and history of workers’ movements; 4) To conduct research into trends and issues that have an impact on workers’ movements.

Programs

Training Program: Offers sessions on workplace organizing, training the trainer, bargaining, solidarity unionism, and building functioning workplace committees. Volunteer trainers are recruited from the community, and receive a small stipend for their contributions.

Educational Access Program: Responsible for developing and maintaining an educational scholarship program to ensure access to the above training sessions. Training session participants will be recruited through partnerships with other organizations; the priority is on recruiting those individuals that would most benefit from the trainings.

History, Arts and Culture Program: Communicates the history, arts and culture of workers’ movements by means of video and audio productions, print and other media.

Research Program: Conducts research into trends and issues that have an impact on workers’ movements, and into new forms of worker organizing. Volunteer researchers are recruited from the community, and receive a small stipend for their contributions.

(Note: While some of the program activities could be immediately implemented, the success of the foundation would allow us to access funds for the others.)

Structure

When funding allows the Foundation will employ one paid worker, the Training and Development Coordinator, who will be responsible for the administrative aspects of the Foundation. This position would report directly to the board; the structure of the board will

be decided after consultation with a lawyer. Volunteer trainers and researchers will be recruited from within the community, and will receive a small stipend for their contributions. Training session participants will be recruited through partnerships with other organizations; the priority is on recruiting those individuals that would most benefit from the trainings.

To move discussions from this working group to the larger union forward, the Santa Barbara GMB passed the following motion:

The SB GMB would like to have added to the 2005 General Assembly an agenda item to discuss and debate the merits of gathering more information about the legalities and meaning involved with forming a non-profit foundation of this nature, and of how the union could keep this entity accountable to the IWW.

(Submitted by Samra Paysse)