

National Project Conference of Turkey: Organizing and Social Dialogue

15 – 16 June

Ankara, Turkey

ICEM

Organizing Context – American Culture

- Individualism
- Competition
- Free Market
- Limited Government

- Aversion to Collective Action and Socialism
- “American Exceptionalism”
- Culture of Capitalism

Historical Background

- Prior to 1935 – Most Workers Organized in the Craft Unions
- 1935 to 1941 Great Upheaval in U.S. – Formation of Social Movement
- Formation of Industrial Trade Unionism – CIO
- Union Density Rose Rapidly
- Peak of 36% in 1946

Historical Background

- Right Wing Reacts (Capitalists)
- 1947 Passage of Taft Hartley Act
 - encouraged individual states to pass anti-workers laws
 - outlawed certain kinds of strikes
 - Outlawed secondary boycotts

Historical Background

- McCarthy Period – Assault on Trade Unions
- Cold War Against Trade Unions
- Left-wing trade unionists kicked out
- Left-wing trade unions kicked out of CIO
- Employers Emboldened
- Trade Unions Went to Sleep

Reagan Years

- Reagan led attacks on trade unions
- “green light” to bust unions
- 1981 Air Traffic Controllers strike
- Use of permanent replacement to break strikes
- Growth of union busting industry
- Growth of right-wing think tanks

Trade Union Decline Today

- 12.4% of total workforce belong to trade unions
- 7.8% private sector
- 36.5% government

Trade Union Decline = Income Inequality

Gini Index

Sweden	23
Denmark	24
Slovenia	24
EU	31
Netherlands	31
Turkey	44
USA	45

U.S.A. – highest unequal distribution of income among all developed countries

Trade Union Decline =

U.S. has higher income equality than Turkey, Iran, Russia, Cameroon and Turkmenistan

Real wages in U.S. have fallen consistently since mid 1970's and parallels the decline of unionization

8 Years of George Bush

Global Financial Crisis

Current Situation for Organizing in United States

- Workers no longer have the right to organize
- Employers routinely use threats, interrogation, surveillance, and false promises
- Use of “professional” union busting consultants has become a multi-billion dollar business.

Current State of Organizing

- in 63 percent of campaigns, supervisors met with workers one on one and interrogated them
- * 57 percent of companies threatened workers with plant closings.
 - * 47 percent threaten to cut wages and benefits
- * 34 percent of the elections, companies fired employees for union activity.
- * 54 percent of the elections, supervisors used these one-on-ones to threaten individual workers.

Current State of Organizing

- In the U.S. today, it requires great acts of courage by workers to organize unions
- There is hope
- In the face of gun being held to their heads, workers win one half of the elections
- Biggest organizing victory – election of Barack Obama and Democratic Congress

What Lies Ahead

- Major Labor Law Reform (EFCA)
 - Choice of card check or ballot
 - Arbitration within two months
 - Stiff Penalties for Labor Law Violations

What Lies Ahead

- Strengthening the Organized – Build Power to Get Employers to Drop Resistance to Organizing
- Bargaining to Organize – obtain neutrality
- Strengthening the Organizing Institute

What Lies Ahead

- Comprehensive Campaigns
- Shareholder Actions
- Labor-Community Alliances
- Environment
- Political Alliances
- Finance
- Supply Chain
- Global Trade Union Power and Solidarity

Social Dialogue?

- All U.S. trade unions believe in and practice social dialogue
- However – social dialogue only works if you have power
- Power comes through the strength of your union or a legal system
- Absent union power and a legal system that forces employers to engage in meaningful social dialogue (collective bargaining), unions are forced into a position of conflict.

U.S. Style or Organizing

- Strategic Plan
- Allocate Resources (Assign Organizers and Campaigners)
- Probe
- Map Out the Work Place
- Build an Organizing Committee Through Home Visits
- Frame the Issues
- Inoculate the Workers
- Recruit Supporters In and Outside the Workplace
- Comprehensive Campaigns

