

Labor Extension Bulletin

A Publication of the University of Massachusetts Labor Extension Program
UMASS AMHERST ■ **UMASS BOSTON** ■ **UMASS DARTMOUTH** ■ **UMASS LOWELL**

VOLUME 14 ■ NUMBER 1 ■ WINTER 2012

Occupy Movement Inspires Labor!



Union activists from the North Shore Labor Council rally at the Occupy Boston site.

2011 started with a full frontal assault on labor, as Republican politicians all over the country -- spurred on by Tea Party anger and midterm election gains -- took potshots at unions, public sector employees, building trades, immigrants and working people of all sorts. Anti-union legislation was proposed in almost every state, and passed in many. But starting in Wisconsin last winter, working people have fought back. And not just organized labor -- despite the constant media barrage over the last decade denigrating unions as a "special interest", this year more and more people from many walks of life took to the streets to protest the stripping away of working people's hard-won rights. We stopped the anti-union forces dead in Ohio. And now it looks as though the pendulum may be beginning to swing the other way.

The most exciting development for progressives this year has undoubtedly been the emergence of the Occupy movement. Starting with just a few people camping out near Wall Street to bring attention to the financiers who caused the economic crash, the Occupy movement quickly spread across the whole country and hooked up with like-minded groups around the world.

With their simple and clear framing of the issue as being the 99% versus the 1%, the Occupy movement was able to capture the atten-

tion of the whole country, including the mainstream media. Their message about economic inequality is essentially what we in organized labor have been trying to say for years. But it has often seemed that we were talking to ourselves, and no one was listening.

What made the Occupy movement's message catch on like wild-fire? Was it their bold tactic of camping out in public space? Was it their savvy use of new technology? Was it their 99% vs. 1% slogan, that clearly pointed to an enemy and invited everyone else to join them? Was it the outraged energy of young people who thought they were in the middle class and suddenly discovered they couldn't count on that any more? Was it all of these factors? We clearly have a lot to learn from the Occupiers.

On the other hand, we in the labor movement have lessons learned from our experience that we can offer this new movement. As the winter deepens and the tents have disappeared, how will the occupy movement survive? How can this spontaneous upsurge be transformed into an organized force that wields political clout? How does this movement that claims to represent the 99% actually reach out to and incorporate people from different backgrounds and different walks of life?

(Continued on back page)

Around THE STATE

Organizers' Roundtable

Second Tuesday of the month, 9:30-11:30 am

Cost: Free

Location: IBEW Local 103

Contact: Bill Corley, 617-436-3710, John Drinkwater, MA AFL-CIO, 781-423-8230

Roundtable discussions on topics of interest to union organizers

WILD in the West Potluck

Wednesday, January 18, from 7:00-8:30 pm

Location: Pioneer Valley AFL-CIO, 640 Page Blvd., Springfield

Contact: Dale Melcher, 413-545-6166 or dmelcher@lrrc.umass.edu

Join us for dinner and a conversation about building a WILD in the West working group. We'll talk about organizing for the WILD 25th Anniversary celebration and what we want to do for women in western Mass. Please RSVP and bring a dish to share. We'll provide drinks.

WILD 25th Anniversary Celebration

March 10, 7:00pm – midnight

Cost: \$25

Location: Boston Carpenters Apprenticeship & Training Fund, 750 Dorchester Ave., Boston

Contact: Emily Hardt, 617-426-0520

The event will include food and beverages, a program celebrating high points of WILD's history and the women who made it, as well as music and dancing.

UMass Dartmouth Dubin Labor Education Center

Legislative Breakfast

April 14, 8:00 - 11:30am

Cost: \$20.00 a person or \$10.00 for seniors

Location: White's of Westport

Contact: Diane Cruz, 508-999-8007

This annual event offers union leaders and activists an opportunity to speak directly to SE Mass elected leaders to address working class concerns.

S P O T L I G H T

Free School University at Occupy Boston

While the Occupy Boston encampment may be gone from Dewey Square for the time being, Free School University (FSU) lives on! FSU began as an on-site learning community at Dewey Square with the goal, as stated on the Occupy Boston wiki (wiki.occupyboston.org/wiki/Solidarity/FSU), of forming "an autonomous zone and share skills needed to maintain that, to entertain, educate and enliven visitors and Occupiers." Since early October 2011, FSU has hosted presentations, discussions, and teach-ins on topics ranging from sexism and racism, to student power and green resistance, to capitalism and anarchism. Many of the events have been captured on video and posted on YouTube providing easy access for both viewing and using in union meetings or workshops. A full listing of FSU's video archive can be found at wiki.occupyboston.org/wiki/FSU_Video_Archive.

Check the site regularly, as FSU is alive and well. The next event, a panel discussion with Immanuel Ness and Elaine Bernard titled "From Occupy to Workers Control" is planned for Friday, January 20th, 6-8 pm at Encuentro 5 (33 Harrison Ave, 5th floor, Boston).

The Resource Corner: Education Resources on Income Inequality

Build the Wheel is an online resource, which consolidates curricula, and other resources including *Occupy Movement Political Education Workshops*.

<http://www.buildthewheel.org/>

The **Economic Policy Institute** is a non-profit, non-partisan think tank that conducts research and analysis on the economic status of working America. See *Economy Track: an Interactive Look at the U.S. Labor Market*, and the *State of Working America*, an ongoing analysis of data on family incomes, wages, jobs, unemployment, wealth, and poverty.

<http://www.epi.org/>

Institute for Policy Studies is a multi-issue think tank whose project *Inequality and the Common Good* provides many resources on the dangers that growing inequality pose for U.S. <http://www.ips-dc.org/inequality>

United for a Fair Economy raises awareness on the consequences of wealth inequality. Download workshops (*The Growing Divide, Bankers, Brokers, Bubbles & Bailouts: An Economic Crisis Workshop, Closing the Racial Wealth Divide, and others*), and links to videos, including *Is the U.S. Broke?* at <http://www.faireconomy.org/>

TheWorkSite.org is an online resource center with articles on income inequality and links to films. "Inside Job," an excellent documentary about Wall Street's destruction of the economy, is available free online at: <http://www.theotherschoolofeconomics.org/?p=2499>

GAINS AND LOSSES, 2007-2009



Sources: New York State Comptroller, Federal Reserve, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Program Notes

■ UMASS AMHERST

Fall began with our conference on *The Future of Work in Massachusetts: Labor's Agenda for Economic Development*. The conference brought together labor, researchers, policy makers and community activists to engage in conversation with a range of experts in the field. Speakers included Amy Dean, Bob Pollin, from PERI, and Dan Swinney, from the Center for Labor and Community Research. We will continue the conversation this winter with area activists and researchers. We have also worked with campus unions, student groups and area trades unions on a campaign to have UMass Amherst adopt a responsible employer policy. Our fall stewards training program attracted stewards from UFCW 1459, SEIU 263, PSU/MTA and IBEW 455. We also began planning for the UALE Northeast Summer School for Union Women, which will be hosted by all the UMass Labor Studies programs and held here on the Amherst campus July 28-August 2. Finally, the Labor Center is delighted to welcome Jasmine Kerrissey to our faculty, beginning in the fall. Jasmine's work on the impact of union members' political participation on US democracy and on the effect of union mergers adds new areas of expertise to our program.

■ UMASS BOSTON

Big changes are taking place at UMass Boston's Labor Resource Center. Tess Ewing, founding Coordinator of the Labor Extension Program, has decided to retire. In the short term, Anneta Argyres, currently the Program Manager at the LRC, will be helping out by covering many of Tess's responsibilities. Anneta is an experienced unionist and labor educator. She came to the LRC six years ago from SEIU Local 509, where she was a field rep and also did a lot of the training for the local. Since joining the LRC, she has taught in both the undergraduate program and various Extension offerings. Tess hopes to pick up occasional training jobs as a consultant to keep from going stir crazy in her retirement. The Labor Resource Center is also moving into new offices. The new digs, right across the hall on the same floor of the same building as before, will bring us together in one area where we can look like a real center rather than a collection of offices. Come visit us!

■ UMASS DARTMOUTH

This fall we have continued with our transit justice work with the Amalgamated Transit Union Locals in New Bedford and Fall River. We have had several grassroots meetings with bus riders and have just had our first victory: holiday service on January 16! Our annual legislative breakfast is on Saturday, April 14. This event is cosponsored with the Greater Southeastern Mass Labor Council and will be held at White's of Westport from 8am to 11:30am. There is a fee and please call Diane Cruz for details at 508-999-8007. UMD Labor Extension will be presenting a Spring Conference planned with an active group of Labor Center advisors. We are just beginning the planning process and will be contacting local activists with details as they develop.

■ UMASS LOWELL

This fall has been busy and productive. Outreach to students and faculty to introduce the *Work, Labor and Society* labor studies minor included reaching out to students as well as hosting an event, the *100th Anniversary of the Bread and Roses Strike: Bringing it into the Classroom*, which also introduced the minor. We finalized the service learning projects which will connect the students taking the core course of the minor with unions and community groups in the area. With the North Shore Labor Council, we worked on both the Legislative dinner, with inspiring keynote speaker Wisconsin Senator Jon Erpenbach; and the 7th annual women's solidarity breakfast, which focused on fighting back against the attacks of big banks and greedy corporations. We have participated in the planning of the many events that will commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Bread and Roses Strike (see Around the State for details).



Save the Date!

37th Annual Northeast Regional Summer School for Union Women

July 28-August 2, 2012

The Rising of the Women: Organizing for Bread and Roses Today

Hosted by the Labor Studies Programs of the University of Massachusetts at UMass Amherst

Our theme this year commemorates the 100th anniversary of the Lawrence strike for Bread and Roses, when textile workers launched an explosive eight-week strike that popularized the slogan "Bread and Roses" - dignity and improved conditions as well as higher wages. Their victory made it clear that semi-skilled workers - many of them recent immigrants and nearly half of them women - could organize themselves to improve their lives. We will note the connection to the Occupy movement of today and the labor movement's fight against the widening wealth gap.

For more information and to be put on our mailing list, contact Dale Melcher, dmelcher@lrrc.umass.edu or 413-545-6166.

Follow us on Facebook at Union Women – Champions of Labor.

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UMass Amherst

Labor Extension Program

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200 Hicks Way

Amherst, MA 01003-9277

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In the Past 4 months...

The UMass Labor Extension Program Has Provided Trainings On These Topics...

■ **Building Support for the Public Sector:
Re-framing the Debate and Taking
Action**

UMass Dartmouth Labor Center
Conference

■ **Officers and Treasurers Training
Spanish and in English**

Massachusetts Nurses Association

■ **Popular Education Presentation:
Organizing Around Pension
"Reform"**

Massachusetts Teachers Association Unit
Presidents

■ **Standing Up To Bullying in the
Workplace**

AFSCME Local 1067

■ **Stewards Training**

Various Union Locals at UMass Lowell

To Contact the UMass Labor Extension Program:

■ **UMASS AMHERST LABOR EXTENSION PROGRAM**

Labor Center, Thompson Hall, 200 Hicks Way
Amherst, MA 01003-9277

Dale Melcher: 413-545-6166 Fax: 413-545-0110

email: dmelcher@lrrc.umass.edu

■ **UMASS BOSTON LABOR EXTENSION PROGRAM**

CPCS Labor Resource Center, 100 Morrissey Blvd.
Boston, MA 02125-3393

Tess Ewing: 617-287-7352

email: tess.ewing@umb.edu

■ **UMASS DARTMOUTH LABOR EXTENSION PROGRAM**

Dubin Labor Education Center, 285 Old Westport Road
North Dartmouth, MA 02747

Kim Wilson: 508-999-8781 Fax: 508-999-9168

email: kwilson@umassd.edu

■ **UMASS LOWELL LABOR EXTENSION PROGRAM**

600 Suffolk St., 5th Floor, Lowell, MA 01854

Susan Winning: 978-934-3127 Fax: 978-934-4033

email: susan_winning@uml.edu

■ **Strategic Planning**

Working Massachusetts

■ **Stewards Training**

SEIU Local 888, locations around the
state

■ **Popular Education: Teaching to
Change**

Massachusetts Teachers Association

■ **Board Training**

Mass Alliance of Professional Nannies

■ **Building an Issue Campaign**

Minority union organizing committee

Occupy Movement Inspires

(Continued from p. 1.)

At least in Boston, the occupiers have been very receptive and supportive of organized labor, and organized labor has been supportive of them. We need to build on this experience, bring "Occupy" people to speak to our memberships, and offer our own ideas without imposing. We need to extend and deepen the political and economic analysis of who is running this country and how they are doing it.

Labor Extension intends to be active on all these fronts.