From Croatia to Zimbabwe

(continued from page 1)

The trainings seek to promote and build such concrete skills as conflict management, communication, negotiation, organizational planning, situational analysis, overcoming the effects of repression and fear, confronting racism and gender discrimination, and building trust. The INTF granted $1,000 in October 1996 for PBI's Guatemala Project.

• Forty Nepali women gathered in Pokara, Nepal in late October 1996 for a week-long training organized jointly by Karuna Center in the US and by Milijuli Nepal. Many women walked several days through remote mountain regions to reach the nearest bus so they could get to the workshop. Nepal's literacy rate for women is abysmally low—16% according some estimates—so ways to achieve equal opportunity to education took up considerable time in the workshop. Each day more women engaged in the participatory process of the workshop by leading groups, reporting to the plenary and participating in role plays and demonstrations. "Their confidence grew as they gave voice to their experiences and saw their lives as dynamic and changeable rather than static and fixed," writes workshop facilitator Paula Green. The INTF granted $2,000 for expenses of this training in July 1996.

• The "International Training for Nonviolence Conflict Intervention," held in April 1996 in Germany, was attended by 20 people from 14 different countries, including Nigeria, Bangladesh, Ecuador, Serbia, Croatia, Ethiopia, India and Northern Ireland. Organized by KURVE Wustrow, the training addressed the themes of nonviolence, teamwork, conflict transformation, reconciliation, working with refugees, analysis and strategy development, and human rights. The INTF supported this training with a $1,500 grant in January 1996.

• MIRamiDa was formed to provide nonviolence training to local activists from nongovernmental organizations, growing out of the experience of hundreds of local and international volunteers who worked since July 1993 in the area of Pakrac, Croatia on pilot peace-building projects initiated by the United Nations Development Project (UNDP) and AntiWar Campaign Croatia. Pakrac was severely affected by fighting in 1991, and until May of 1995 was divided by a ceasefire line. Our $2,000 INTF grant in January 1996 went toward MIRamiDA's second training, in which 12 participants from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia gathered together for a week exploring issues of nonviolence, civil society, work in conflict and post-conflict areas, and more.

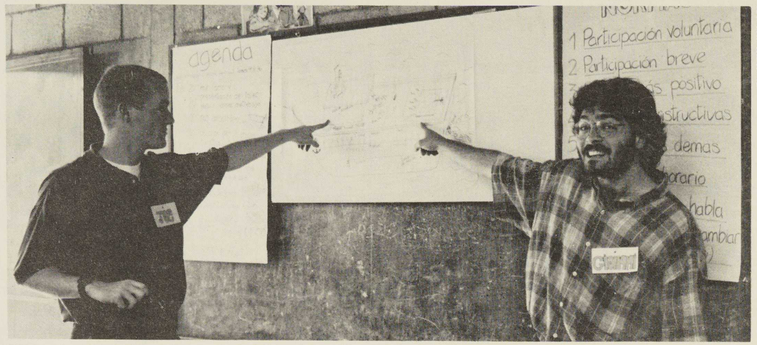

PHOTO BY PBI

PBI volunteers Joe Sperry and Gianni Rondinello facilitate a nonviolence workshop with grade school teachers at Chinautla, near Guatemala City, in September of 1996.

PHOTO BY DAVID GRANT

Activists simulate an international human rights delegation in "crossing the border," part of KURVE Wustrow's training in Germany last spring.

It's not too early to consider studying up for May Day, the workers' holiday widely observed around the world. For most people, particularly socialists and radicals, May 1st is the traditional time to celebrate the advances of organized labor and agitate for workers' rights. This holiday originated in the United States in the late 1800s, but was supplanted by Labor Day in the 1950s to undercut the militancy of the traditional observance.

A.J. Muste played an important role in the American labor movement early in his career. For most of the 1920s he was director of the Brookwood Labor College, helping to train union organizers. Many of his students went on to help found the Congress of Industrial Organization (CIO) and lead the great strikes and organizing drives of the 1930s.

One of his closest associates was Sidney Lens (1912-1986). Lens enjoyed a long career as a writer, union organizer and early anti-war labor activist. With A.J., Lens was also a writer and editor of *Liberation* magazine. Lens spent his life working for progressive labor action and peace.

The Muste Institute has in print a collection of essays on labor activism by Lens. The six pieces date from between 1959 and 1982, but they are as relevant today as when they were first written. Lens analyzed and wrote about many of the very issues unions and labor activists are facing today: the shortcomings of "business unionism"; labor solidarity; the evolution of the workplace from predominantly blue collar to white collar labor. He also emphasizes the need for peace, labor and social justice activists to work together for common cause.

This pamphlet, number twelve in the Institute's Essay Series, is a valuable resource for labor education classes, labor history, and 20th century American history. Supporters of the A.J. Muste Memorial Institute can purchase this pamphlet for just $1 a copy, shipping included; ten or more are 75 cents each postpaid. Stock up today to send to your friends in the true spirit of May Day this year.

A. J. Muste Memorial Institute
ESSAY SERIES

No. 12

SIDNEY
LENS

1. *The Radical Heritage*
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4. *George Meany's Troubled Legacy*
5. *Heavy Lifting: Five Not So Easy Pieces for the Unions*
6. *Hold That Line*

Grantee Profile:
Working for a Better Unionism

The Muste Institute granted $1,000 in March 1996 to the Association for Union Democracy (AUD) to help reestablish the Minority Workers Rights Project, which had been in hiatus since its founder and director left to take a job at a local union. In May, AUD hired Alice Joseph-Harney to direct both the Women's Project and the Minority Workers Rights Project. Joseph-Harney has brought to AUD a broad range of labor experience from her work in Canada and in her native Trinidad. The following grantee profile is edited from reports submitted by AUD to the Muste Institute.

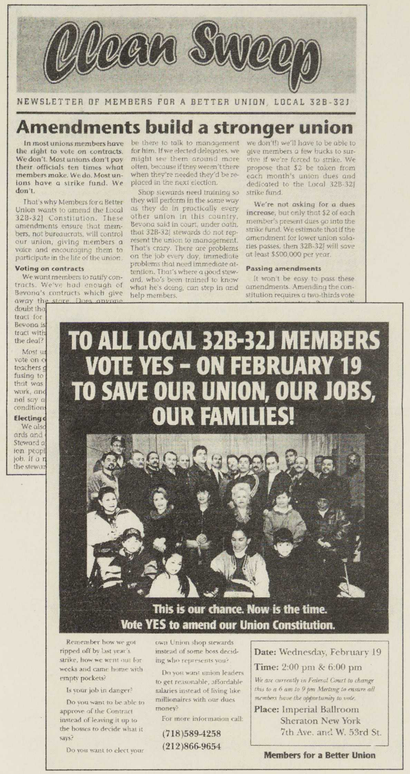
When janitor Carlos Guzmán, an Ecuadoran immigrant, criticized the president of the 70,000-member New York City local 32B-32J of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the local hired private detectives to keep Guzmán under surveillance. Guzmán found pro bono legal assistance, won a $100,000 judgement against the local and publicized the case nationally. With AUD's help Guzmán has now formed Members for a Better Union (MBU), a permanent rank and file organization to combat abuses in the local, such as wage chiseling, favoritism in job assignments, excessive work loads, and sexual harassment. When the local union's leaders refused to allow women workers to vote in the election of shop stewards at the World Trade Center, MBU turned out over 100 people for a demonstration which forced the union to rerun the election.

In May, a multi-racial group of 20 MBU members attended AUD's rank and file education program, a series of six classes on topics such as how to participate in union meetings, publishing a rank and file newsletter, and members' rights in contract negotiations. In September MBU published 10,000 copies of *Clean Sweep*, an eight-page newsletter, with a lead story proposing changes to 32B-32J's constitution. The appearance of the first issue prompted union business agents to make phone calls to members' homes warning them against reading *Clean Sweep*.

The Minority Workers Rights Project has also become involved in helping African-American members of a construction workers' local in New Jersey to organize against discrimination in their hiring hall. In September, Alice Joseph-Harney and AUD director Carl Biers conducted a workshop for members of the local in a church, advising them to distribute copies of the hiring hall rules and encourage co-workers to exercise their rights under those rules. AUD remains in touch with the leaders of the reform group, and will help with their plan to publish a rank and file newsletter.

AUD has also been involved in a similar struggle against discrimination within the New York City Ironworkers Local 580. While the discrimination is this local seems to fall hardest on African-American workers, it is also felt by all members who are not Irish-American. Of the ten workers who have contacted AUD so far, one is Native American, one Latino, and one Italian-American. Several of the members have already filed complaints with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), but AUD is helping them tackle the discrimination as a group.

Operating on the principle that internal democracy will make the labor movement a more powerful force for social change, AUD assists hundreds of workers each year, helping inform them of their rights to free speech, fair election and due process, and assisting them in the formation of rank and file caucuses. (Association for Union Democracy, 500 State Street, 2nd Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11217; 718-855-6650; fax 718-855-6799)



Clean Sweep

NEWSLETTER OF MEMBERS FOR A BETTER UNION, LOCAL 32B-32J

Amendments build a stronger union

In most unions members have the right to vote on contracts. We don't. Most unions don't pay their officials ten times what members make. We do. Most unions have a strike fund. We don't.

That's why Members for a Better Union wants to amend the Local 32B-32J Constitution. These amendments ensure that members, not bureaucrats, will control our union, giving members a voice and encouraging them to participate in the life of the union.

Voting on contracts

We want members to ratify contracts. We've had enough of Bevona's contracts which give away the store. Does anyone doubt that if we had a contract ratified with the deal?

Most of us vote on a contract. Teachers get a ballot. Voting is fading to nothing. Why that was work, one member said say it conditions.

Electing s

We also want to elect shop stewards and Union Stewards. Stewards are the men people go to when they have a job, if a n the stewards

Remember how we got ripped off by last year's strike, how we went out for weeks and came home with empty pockets?

Is your job in danger?

Do you want to be able to approve of the Contract instead of leaving it up to the bosses to decide what it says?

Do you want to elect your own Union shop stewards instead of some boss deciding who represents you?

Do you want union leaders to get reasonable, affordable salaries instead of living like millionaires with our dues money?

For more information call:

(718)589-4258
(212)866-9654

be there to talk to management for him. If we elected delegates, we might see them around more often, because if they weren't there when they're needed they'd be replaced in the next election.

Shop stewards need training so they will perform in the same way as they do in practically every other union in this country. Bevona said in court, under oath, that 32B-32J stewards do not represent the union to management. That's crazy. There are problems on the job every day; immediate problems that need immediate attention. That's where a good steward, who's been trained to know what he's doing, can step in and help members.

We don't! we'll have to be able to give members a few bucks to survive if we're forced to strike. We propose that $2 be taken from each month's union dues and dedicated to the Local 32B-32J strike fund.

We're not asking for a dues **increase**, but only that $2 of each member's present dues go into the strike fund. We estimate that if the amendment for lower union salaries passes, then 32B-32J will save at least $500,000 per year.

Passing amendments

It won't be easy to pass these amendments. Amending the constitution requires a two-thirds vote

TO ALL LOCAL 32B-32J MEMBERS VOTE YES – ON FEBRUARY 19 TO SAVE OUR UNION, OUR JOBS, OUR FAMILIES!

This is our chance. Now is the time.
Vote YES to amend our Union Constitution.

Date: Wednesday, February 19
Time: 2:00 pm & 6:00 pm
We are currently in Federal Court to change this to a 6 am to 9 pm. Meeting to ensure all members have the opportunity to vote.
Place: Imperial Ballroom
Sheraton New York
7th Ave. and W. 53rd St.

Members for a Better Union

If you are making up your will, we hope you will consider leaving a bequest to the Muste Institute to ensure the continuation of our work in the future. A suggested simple wording to use in making bequests is: "I bequeath_____dollars ($_____) or _____ percent of my estate to the A.J. Muste Memorial Institute, Inc., a charitable, not-for-profit organization located at 339 Lafayette Street, New York, New York, 10012, to be used for its general purposes." To discuss other types of bequests, such as those directed toward a specific purpose, write or call Murray Rosenblith, the Institute's Executive Director.