

Grassroots Coalition Bulletin # 17, September 27, 2008

After several months of planning, the time has come to start our new program based on the necessity of involving millions of hitherto uninvolved people, if we are to create a radically different society, one in which justice, compassion and democracy prevail.

We are reaching out to churches, colleges, social justice organizations and Organized Labor.

Accordingly, in the next several weeks we're scheduled to:

- Speak at the Masses at an inner city Catholic church in Baltimore in October.
- Speak at a progressive Folk and Arts Festival near New York City in October, arranged by a Labor organizer.
- Speak to sociology classes at a university in Pittsburgh in November.
- Meet with four Catholic pastors in Camden NJ in October.

We're working on additional dates in these cities, as well as in Philadelphia, Boston and Chicago, which is all that we can handle now. With additional help, however, we can expand our effort in these seven cities, and begin working in other parts of the country.

At these meetings, we'll look for people to become members of small groups, in which they find the mutual support and encouragement needed for perseverance and hard work. We'll seek out those who are acutely conscious of the need for change in their own lives, especially:

- The one-third of the workforce who are either unemployed or underemployed, and therefore lack some or all of the basic necessities of life - housing, health care, food, education, healthy environment, transportation, and are well aware of their deprivations.
- Members of the middle class who see themselves sliding down the economic slope toward poverty, and who fear for their children and grandchildren.
- Young people in colleges and high schools who are on the threshold of living independently and who realize it is becoming increasingly difficult for them to enter the middle class and that they'll be fortunate to do as well as their parents.

Since most people will not respond to this invitation unless they see that their participation will benefit themselves, we'll encourage and assist them to work together to:

- Obtain good jobs with good companies, with good incomes, benefits and security.
- Press governments and corporations to change their policies and programs that are aimed at weakening Organized Labor, moving jobs abroad, lowering the income of the majority of Americans and destroying the environment, all for the sake of maximizing wealth and power for themselves. They will use their own power of the purse to influence companies, and word of mouth and formal advertising to bring unjust corporate practices and programs to the attention of the purchasing public. They will use traditional means, voting, phoning, visiting, letter writing, to influence their elected representatives, and to replace them when they do not work for the common good.
- Create a more just and democratic economic system, composed of democratically-run, worker-owned cooperatives, modeled on the network of worker-owned cooperatives in Mondragon Spain, started in 1956 with only five workers, and now numbering over 30,000 workers.
- Seek out public and private agencies and organizations which provide assistance and resources that satisfy the basic needs indicated above. We'll help them to help themselves to obtain those resources to the maximum extent, both for themselves and for the rest of society.

- Press those agencies and organizations, along with their funding sources, e.g. the federal government, to increase the level of assistance until it enables them and others to enjoy a decent life.

No two of these small groups will be exactly alike. Some will focus on certain of the activities listed above and others will focus on different activities. But as the number of groups increases, enough people will focus on all of the activities to make a significant difference in the economic and political workings of society. Herein lies the key to success - big numbers. With enough people involved, we can reshape society and transform our lives and the lives of others. Without those numbers, little will change.

This is an invitation to you to work with us. As you can imagine, there are many different facets of this effort. In every part of the country, we need to identify receptive churches, colleges, social justice organizations and labor unions, to visit them to describe our effort and get it started, to set up working relationships with organizations in the area with similar values and principles, to identify work with sympathetic people in various levels of government, to raise a minimal amount of funding for operating expenses, and to encourage and assist participants until they are able to operate independently. Nationally and internationally, we need to keep abreast of current economic and environmental developments e.g. Climate Change; and we need to keep in touch with the many organizations that can supply useful information and resources.

If you are interested in exploring the possibility of learning more about these and other ways in which you can play a part, please let us know.

Geography and money are factors in our traveling. We can drive from our home in south central Pennsylvania to the Northeast, the Mid-Atlantic, the upper Southeast and the Midwest. If you live in any of those areas, it will be easy for us to meet. If, however, you live beyond those areas, we can come to you by plane and spend time with you and others if you can raise the money for the plane ticket (for one person). Or you can come here and stay with us and spend enough time to prepare yourself to get started where you live. In any case, after you get started, we'll communicate regularly to share experiences and resources.

We can all see that there are many social justice efforts in process, which of course, is good. But we can also see that generally injustices continue, and in many cases, are increasing. This, therefore, is an attempt to get to the root of the injustices, the imbalance of power, and shift economic and political power into the hands of those who will use it to create a just society. Please join us in making it move forward as rapidly as possible.

John and Iona Conner

**Grassroots Coalition HCR 83 Box 881 Shade Gap PA 17255
814-259-3372 grassroots1@pa.net**