“Sustainable Jobs, Sustainable Workplaces” conference: detailed agenda

Thursday, October 27, Boott Mill Museum, 2d floor auditorium:
6:00 Reception, light food

7:00 Welcomes by Lowell National Historical Park superintendent Michael Creasey; Robert Haynes, president of the Mass AFL-CIO; and Charley Richardson, director of UMass Lowell Labor Extension, who will also moderate and wrap up the evening.
Keynote address by Larry Cohen, President of CWA. Larry will discuss collective bargaining as a public good and a necessity for winning secure and safe jobs for working people and for building an economic base for the community. He will talk about the need to insert workers’ collective voices into economic and social decision-making at all levels. And he will propose strategies that are necessary to make this a reality.
Discussion will bring out the themes to be pursued on Friday.

8:30 Adjourn

Friday, October 28, Alumni Hall, UMass Lowell North Campus:

8:00 Breakfast

9:00 Welcome by CITA co-chair Bob Forrant. Overview of the day by Susan Winning of LEP who will kick off a very brief table exercise: What does a sustainable or “good” job mean to you?

9:30 What’s happening to our jobs?
Activist leaders from retail, postal, and healthcare unions will describe the concrete changes they are experiencing in their working lives.
Chris Tilly will respond by describing additional wage/job/skill/gender/mobility trends he and Françoise Carre found in their retail study, and what they mean for possible labor strategies.
Charley Richardson as moderator will pull together themes and ask:
• Are these trends playing out in your industry and if so how?
• What are the arenas for action?
Participants discuss at their tables, name the primary trends in their sectors, and write them on sheets of paper. We will post them on walls of Alumni Hall to see during the break or at lunch.
Papers: Charley Richardson/Susan Winning/Mike Prokosch, and Chris Tilly/Françoise Carré/Brandynn Holgate studies of retail, postal, and healthcare industries.

11:00 Coffee break or keep going & let people get coffee when they want

11:15 What are the effects in our communities?
A community leader from Coalition for a Better Acre will talk about job loss, the degradation of work as good jobs disappear, and the impact on communities and community organizing. Jeff Muckensturm will add insights and trends from the paper. Participants discuss, name trends they’ve seen, and name arenas for action. Moderator will sum up the discussion.
Paper: Bob Forrant/Jeff Muckensturm study of industrial decline in cities – Jeff presenting
12:00 Lunch

1:00 What is shaping the corporate decisions behind these trends?
Ric Casilli of IUE-CWA Local 201 will briefly name the trends that he has seen at GE, then asks, “Where, when and why are these decisions being made, and where do we need to intervene?” The three papers’ principal authors will respond to that question, with discussions of the New Economy Business Model, the impact of regional and firm characteristics, and the three I’s (ideology, iteration, and information). Moderator: Susan Winning or Mike Prokosch.
Papers: Bill Lazonick on high tech employment relations in Route 128, Bill Mass on regional and firm characteristics of the Massachusetts high tech boom, and Chris Tilly/Phil Moss/Hal Salzman on corporate restructuring.

2:15 Break

2:30 What solutions can workers push for?
Jeff Bollen of UFCW, someone from the Gillette campaign about outsourced work, someone from SEIU 2020’s Personal Care Assistant drive and others will describe the challenges they are facing in organizing drives, policy campaigns, and dealing with new technology in the workplace. They will present the question to the two papers’ authors: “What strategies are needed to change the future of work, are they practical within our reality here in the US and Massachusetts, and where do workers/unions have leverage to actually make a difference?” Moderator: Susan Winning or Mike Prokosch.
Papers: Mignon Duffy on new organizing approaches and Brendan Haley/Ernst Hollander on social democracy and green industrial policy -- Brendan presenting

3:45 An agenda for workers and unions
Jane Slaughter wraps up the day with “Shop floor changes are really important, and you can do stuff, here are examples.” No discussion (no time). Charley Richardson wraps up.

4:30 End; ask participants to fill out written evaluations.

Notes on process and organization
- We will audiotape the day to capture the ideas & experiences of all the participants.
- Our basic format is: labor activists say “here are the realities we’re confronting;” researchers say “this is what we found -- here’s how it helps understand and change those realities;” and participants apply these insights to their own experiences. We collect participants’ insights and suggestions for action.
- Papers are being posted on the conference website, http://www.uml.edu/com/CITA/Conference%202005.html or to see the papers go to http://www.uml.edu/com/CITA/Conference%202005%20papers.html. We will have summaries of the papers and some copies of the full papers at the conference Friday.