

Social Movement Unionism and the Kilusang Mayo Uno¹

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TRADE UNIONISM IN THE LESS ECONOMICALLY developed countries (LEDCs)² is in crisis: low rates of industrialization, state opposition and/or cooptation, incompetent and/or self-serving leadership, and poor membership participation dog most trade unions.³ Meanwhile, countries are manipulated by the multinational corporations into competing for a limited amount of investment,⁴ the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) are restructuring economies for the purpose of increasing exploitation and powerlessness, capital is making high rates of profit, workers are exploited, and the living standards for all who must sell their labor to survive and their families continue to decrease.

1. Thanks to Amrita Chhachhi, Rob Lambert, E.A. Ramaswamy, Freek Schiphorst, and Peter Waterman for their informed comments, criticisms, and suggestions of earlier drafts of this paper. Obviously, the responsibility for what is included is mine alone.

In many LEDCs, the trade union movement is limited to a small proportion of the work force. Workers who are lucky enough to get employment in a unionized workplace are often seen by the ununionized as being some sort of "working class elite" or "aristocracy," and thus separate and above the large masses of people. This is not to claim that these unionized workers are overpaid, or that their higher rates of pay have made them passive, but that their interests are seen as differing from those of the large majority of workers and peasants. As a result, rather than uniting the poor and dispossessed, quite often the trade unions are seen as separating their members from the rest of the working people.⁵

At the same time, trade union members are often quite unhappy with their leaders. Unions are traditionally organized in a hierarchical manner, with decision-making confined to those at the highest levels, the most removed from the day-to-day life of the workplace. Accordingly, the interests of the leaders and the members usually differ considerably. And while some leaders are able to increase their members' rates of pay, they are almost never able to resolve the problems of oppression and alienation among workers, which are inherent whenever those who do the work do not control production.

However, trade unionism does not have to be this way. In countries as

2. Like many others, I am frustrated with the terms developed to date which are used to differentiate the more economically developed countries -- often referred to as "First World" or "industrialized" countries -- from the less economically developed countries, which are often referred to as the "Third World" countries. (I am ignoring at this point the so-called "communist" or "formerly-communist" countries.) Unfortunately, I have not come up with an alternative conception with which I am satisfied with.

However, I reject the term "less developed countries" (LDCs) because it specifically incorporates levels of economic development as being representative of historical or cultural development as well, which is very "Western"-centric (and here I am caught by terminology again because I include Japan), if not racist. One shudders to think of anyone considering the United States, for example, as being more historically or culturally developed than the societies of China, India, Egypt, or those of the Mayans and Aztecs of Latin America. But because there is a difference in economic development -- obviously a product of imperialism -- I will use the terms "more economically developed countries" (MEDCs) and "less economically developed countries" (LEDCs).

3. Many of these problems -- although more of de-industrialization rather than lack of industrialization -- also dog the unions in the MEDCs, and in the United States in particular. While not downplaying or ignoring these problems in the MEDCs, in fact, my MA Thesis specifically focuses on the situation in the United States, I am limiting this article to focusing on conditions in the LEDCs.

4. Although some of those who are successful in competing, like Indonesia for example, receive extensive foreign investment.

5. I use the term "working people" to signify a much more inclusive conceptualization than "working class," which is an inadequate concept as far as I am concerned. (See Scipes, 1991b, for discussion of this point.) I include in my conceptualization all people who must sell their labor power to survive and who are relatively powerless as individuals as far as the overall operation of their respective workplaces and societies are concerned. Thus I specifically include those who work in the home, with or without payment.

disparate as Brazil, Philippines, South Africa, and South Korea,⁶ labor movements have emerged which have taken a qualitatively different approach to the problems of the poor and dispossessed in their respective societies: they are creating autonomous, militant, class conscious unionism which sees the situation of the unionized workers as being intimately connected with the situation of working people throughout their country. Accordingly, they have been using their power within the production-distribution-exchange process to both fight to improve the wages and working conditions of their members *and* to fight for the improvement of the situation of all working people in the society, which means they are fighting for improvement of conditions for the majority of people in the society. However, this extends beyond issues of wages, working conditions, and employment security -- traditionally considered "economic" issues -- to include engaging in "political" struggles for democracy and human rights, and against "class," racial and national minority, and gender oppression. These new unions are organized democratically, with the leadership responsive and responsible to the membership. At the same time, these new unions have also developed a larger perspective pertaining to their country and its relations to other countries within the world economy. Thus the conditions in the workplace are seen as being intimately connected with the national situation; therefore, in order to change the conditions at the workplace, the society's relationship with the world's political-economic system must be changed.

But how do we understand this new type of trade unionism? Peter Waterman and Rob Lambert have been engaged in a "discussion" over the

6. I served for five years as the North American representative for the British-based journal *International Labour Reports*. During this time, from reading the articles published in the journal as well as other materials -- particularly Transnational Information Exchange (1984), MacShane, Plaut, and Ward (1985), *Asian Labour Monitor* (1987), and Munck (1988) -- and from my experiences with the KMU in the Philippines, I saw that new labor movements were emerging in these countries that were obviously different from traditional unions. The specific labor centers in these countries which I refer to -- CUT (*Central Unica do Trabalhadores*) in Brazil, KMU (*Kilusang Mayo Uno*) in the Philippines, COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions) in South Africa, and KTUC (Korean Trade Union Congress) in South Korea -- are ones which, as I argue in this paper, should be conceptualized differently from traditional trade unions. These experiences, I suggest, provide the basis for the development of the conceptualization of "social movement unionism" and serve as a model to rejuvenate trade unionism in particularly the LEDCs. And despite being beyond the scope of this paper, I think social movement unionism is a model for workers in the MEDCs as well; hence, I suggest it is an international and not just a "Third World" model.

However, I do not confine the possible development of social movement unionism to just these countries; it is the experiences of these labor centers, however, which are the clearest and thus the strongest bases for any new model. Certainly, the experiences of *Solidarnosc* in Poland should be considered, and *Solidarnosc* probably fits this conception at least during 1980-81 -- Lambert and Webster include *Solidarnosc* in their conception of social movement unionism, although in general and not limited to any particular time period (Lambert and Webster, 1988: 39, FN #3). However, I am not so sure what happened during the martial law period, and evidence I have seen is contradictory -- obviously, much more research needs to be done. Munck (1988: 121-22) writes of some local forms of social movement unionism in India. Personal reports on the UNTS in El Salvador suggest it might be another social movement unionism-type labor center, but more detailed information needs to be acquired. I have heard some interesting reports on new unions in Mexico. I assume there are also other experiences along these lines taking place in other countries, although they have not yet been reported. In short, I believe this concept of social movement unionism fits a range of unions beyond those which I specifically refer to.

past three or so years, trying to conceptualize this unionism which Waterman calls "social movement" unionism. I have found their thinking stimulating yet insufficient: I do not think they have it right yet. It is the purpose of this paper to formally join in the discussion, and try to develop the conceptualization of social movement unionism to a higher degree, and to argue that this new conceptualization is the basis for a new type of trade unionism.

In this paper, after discussing traditional conceptualizations of trade unions, I review and discuss the positions of Waterman and Lambert, and then advance my own thinking based on my experiences as a shop floor militant trade unionist, labor organizer, and researcher in the United States over a fifteen year period. I then present a case study of the *Kilusang Mayo Uno* (KMU: May First Movement) Labor Center of the Philippines, which provides strong evidence for the power of this new conceptualization. Accordingly, I will conclude that not only is social movement unionism a new type of trade unionism but that, to date, it offers the best way forward, albeit with considerable risks, for unions in the LEDCs.

Traditional Types of Trade Unions

Before discussing the concept of social movement unionism, it is important to present at least some basic understanding of traditional types of trade unionism. Because I am arguing that social movement unionism is a different type, I must compare it to the traditional type in order to have some understanding of how it differs.

Based on Clegg's 1976 book, *Trade Unionism Under Collective Bargaining*, Cella and Treu (1987:197) report that there is no systematic theory of trade unionism or of national labor movements. With a fairly good survey of labor movements, particularly in the more economically developed countries, they put forth a typology of five different trade union models, which they call "opposition, business (or domestic), competitive, participation, state-sponsored" (221). They conclude that,

short of establishing precise cause-effect relationship, it can be said that the most decisive variables affecting models of unionism are union density, workplace organization, relations with political parties and with the political context of industrial relations (Cella and Treu: 223).⁷

7. Miriam Golden, in her study of union responses to austerity programs in Italy in the late 1970s to the early 1980s, took a different approach. She tried to explain different policy orientations of organized labor, using political, sociological, economic-industrial, and organizational typologies. She found each of these insufficient, if not "patently inaccurate." She argued that "a more adequate account of union policy orientations should instead be actor-centered, focused on union officials, themselves conscious agents who evaluate situations and issues according to their goals and preferences and on that basis respond to structural constraints -- business conditions, the extent of organizational centralization, the pressures from friendly or unfriendly political parties and governments" (Golden, 1988: 5-6). And although this does not solve the problem of a lack of theory of trade unionism or of national labor movements, to me it suggests a much more interesting approach than that suggested by Cella and Treu.

However, this typology is insufficient. Each of these types of trade unionism, including "opposition unionism" as I understand their conception, is based on acceptance of the status quo in their respective society, regardless of how the union movement chooses to relate to and influence that. There is no conception of a unionism -- whether Leninist, nationalist, or any other -- which challenges the status quo. Nor any that addresses the international activities of at least some of the labor movements in the more economically developed countries (MEDCs) -- e.g., the US-based AFL-CIO, the British TUC, the German DGB -- which have opposed "challenging" types of trade unionism,⁸ nor any that addresses the international activities of the unions in state socialist social systems.⁹

Lambert and Webster (1988), after briefly mentioning Richard Hyman's conception of "optimistic" and "pessimistic" traditions of trade unionism, and obviously generalizing from South Africa, discuss three types of trade unionism: "orthodox," "populist," and "political, or social movement" unionisms. They define "orthodox" as:

a form of trade unionism which concentrates almost exclusively on workplace issues; fails to link production issues to wider political issues; and finally encourages its members to become politically involved without necessarily engaging itself in the wider political arena, believing that this is best left to other organizations more suited to the task. The political content of such unionism varies widely, but in each instance, what is common to this orientation is an accommodation and absorption into industrial relations systems, which not only institutionalizes conflict, but also serves to reinforce the division between economic and political forms of struggle so essential to the maintenance of capitalist relations in production, in the community and in the state (Lambert and Webster: 20-21).

They define "populist" unionism as

unionism in which trade unionism and struggles in the factory are downplayed. The latter is a tendency that neglects struggles over wages, supervision, managerial controls at the workplace and job evaluation. It places in its stead a political engagement that only serves to dissipate shop floor struggles (Lambert and Webster: 21).

8. The best single source on international activities of the British TUC remains Thomson and Larson, 1978. For a report on the German political foundations see Pinto-Duschinsky, 1991. The DGB operates through the Frederick Ebert Stiftung foundation.

There has been extensive reporting and discussion of AFL-CIO activities over the years, of which the most comprehensive listing is in Scipes, 1989. For a recent overview of the AFL-CIO's foreign operations, see Sims, 1991. However, most of the analysis is, in my opinion, incorrect, blaming factors and organizations external to it, rather than looking for factors internal to the AFL-CIO, for its imperialist foreign policy. For a detailed look at the roots of AFL-CIO foreign policy, focusing on internal factors, see Scipes, 1989.

9. There is one written report which is critical that I have been able to find on the international activities of the "East Bloc" World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), and that is Waterman, 1986. Nonetheless, this report demonstrates that the communist trade unions function in many ways similarly to the "Western" ones, although with a lot less money.

And "political, or social movement unionism" as

attempts to link production to wider political issues. It is a form of union organization that facilitates an active engagement in factory-based, production politics and in community and state power issues. *** ... it does not negate the role of a political party, but rather asserts the need for a co-ordinating political body that is democratic in its practices and therefore able to relate to political unionism in a non-instrumental manner (Lambert and Webster: 21).

Lambert and Webster's conceptualizations, although based on the situation in South Africa, are much more useful for understanding different approaches to trade unionism than are Cella and Treu's because they include "challenging" types of unionism in their typology; however, like Cella and Treu, they do not address international activities of the unions in their models.

However, I have several differences with Lambert and Webster. I disagree with their "orthodox" model when they say that this type of unionism does not necessarily engage itself in the wider political arena -- this certainly is not true of the British TUC nor, for that matter, is it true of the AFL-CIO (and it probably is not true of any trade union movement in the world in one way or the other). Both labor centers are very actively engaged in electoral politics, while accommodating to and being absorbed within their respective industrial relations systems. I generally agree with Lambert and Webster's "populist" model, although I would suggest that these unions are controlled by or subordinate themselves to political parties or to a particular state, and to which they give primary loyalty instead of to the immediate interests of their members. And in cases where these unions exist within a state socialist social system,¹⁰ they can and sometimes engage in international labor operations which are designed to support unions affiliated with political parties or states which are allied with their dominant party/state. And I will discuss my conception of social movement unionism below.

In response to Lambert and Webster's models, I suggest that there are three general types of trade unionism, although I would call them "economic," "political," and "social movement"-- and I use these terms differently than do Lambert and Webster.

I would define "economic" unionism as being unionism which accommodates itself to, and is absorbed by, the industrial relations system of its particular country; which engages in political activities within the dominant political system for the well-being of its members and its institutional self but generally limits itself to immediate interests; and which can and sometimes does engage in international labor activities which are largely but not totally designed to help maintain the well-being of its country's current economic system, ostensibly for the well-being of its members, and these international activities are usually opposed to any type of system-challenging trade unionism.

10. Although it may seem contradictory, I think this "populist" type also fits the situation in state socialist countries, despite its name. In the typology I advance, see below, I refer to this type as "political."

I would define "political" unionism as unionism which is dominated by or subordinated to a political party or state, to which the leaders give primary loyalty -- this includes both the Leninist and "radical nationalist" versions. This results in generally but not totally neglecting workplace issues for "larger" political issues. These unions can and sometimes engage in international labor operations which are designed to support unions affiliated with political parties/states which are allied with their party/state.

And again, I will leave my discussion of social movement unionism to below.

But the key aspect to recognize in both economic and political unionism is that they do not link production issues with issues of political power.

Reflections on the Debate Over "Social Movement Unionism"

In response to a request from people involved in labor studies and struggles in the Philippines, Peter Waterman (1988) tried to develop the conceptualization of social movement unionism as an effort to assist their understanding of labor struggles in their country. Acknowledging the use of this conceptualization in the works of Webster (1987), Lambert (1988), Lambert and Webster (1988), and Munck (1988), Waterman particularly focused on Lambert and Webster's use of the term "social movement unionism," in which he wondered if this term was nothing more than a substitute for the earlier term "political unionism."

Waterman wanted to ensure that this concept was theoretically developed so that it would be much more than a substitute:

I am concerned that the term be defined in such a way that it provides both a new theoretical tool and suggests a new political norm. In other words, that it be distinguished both from traditional terminologies and from traditional practices (Waterman, 1988: 1).

In his paper, Waterman stated the necessity of relating this social movement unionism to social movements, and then discussed the development of what he calls "movementist," or social movement, theory.

Comparing social movement unionism to the old concept of political unionism, Waterman notes, "We are talking not simply of a different union model but a different *understanding* of the role of the working class and its typical organization in the transformation of society." He goes on to point out that this new concept is a product of the newly emerging social movements and a new type of unionism (Waterman, 1988: 6-7).

It was within this orientation that the discussion has taken place.

Waterman's Conceptualization

Peter Waterman has been able to develop his conceptualization more than Rob Lambert. However, this does not necessarily make it clearer.

I think there are three main points in Waterman's 1991a¹¹ conceptualization: one, he sees social movement unionism as being not only a different type of trade unionism but based on a different understanding of the working class and its organization in the struggle to transform society; two, he thinks this type is -- and must be -- radically different from the Leninist conceptualization of trade unionism; and three, he sees social movement unionism as necessarily being linked with other social movements. I will discuss each of these three points.

I think the first point is the clearest. It is based on the theory coming from Laclau and Mouffe, 1981, based on their understanding and surpassing of Gramsci.¹² The concept of social movement unionism understands workers' struggles as being just one site of political struggle, and not the only or even primary one.

Therefore, social movement unions use their strategic position within society's production-distribution-exchange system to fight for the "dispossessed" and "powerless" of the society -- all workers, the poor, women, students, children, ecologists, peace activists, etc. -- in alliance with and in conjunction with both these people organized in their own organizations and those who are not.¹³ The important factor is being ready to join together on an equal basis with those who are struggling for power to change the world and particularly their respective society, and joining them when the opportunity presents itself.

Because of this different approach, it follows that this new understanding does not confine workers' struggles only to the workplace nor does it limit workers' struggles to those carried out by industrial workers. In fact, it

11. That I referred to Waterman's 1988 piece in the section above while jumping to his 1991 piece in this section might cause some confusion among readers. Waterman set out the parameters of the discussion in his earlier piece, although his 1991 piece is considerably more developed. Therefore, while wanting to situate the debate, I also wanted to use the strongest development of his argument, hence, the shift in articles referred to.

12. Because I disagree with the theoretical basis for Laclau and Mouffe's position, although I agree with the position itself, I felt it necessary to develop my own conceptualization of this point, which I have developed in my MA Thesis (Scipes 1991b). However, this is beyond the scope of the present article.

13. Because of the way Waterman formulated the debate, this has confused some readers. Social movement unionism does not mean ignoring struggles for wages, benefits, and working conditions in the workplace and only fighting for "larger" issues outside; social movement unionism includes fighting to include workers' power and wages, benefits, and conditions in the workplace and using workers' power inside society's production-distribution-exchange system to join with others to fight for "larger" issues.

In the latest version of his thinking, Waterman (1991b) recognizes the imbalance and focuses more on workplace issues. However, since this version still does not address the key issue I see in understanding the concept, I do not review this paper.

does not even confine its definition of "worker" to those in the formal sector, to those who are waged, or even to those who are employed. Therefore, this type is a qualitatively different understanding of the working class and its organization in the struggle to transform society.

Waterman's second point -- that the concept of social movement unionism is and must be different from the Leninist conceptualization of trade unionism -- is supported by this different understanding of the working class and its organization to transform society.

However, the key point to be faced when differentiating social movement unionism from other conceptualizations, which Waterman is not clear on, is the relationship between economic and political struggles.¹⁴ In contrast to Waterman, we must anticipate Rob Lambert's conceptualization and refer to his thinking because Lambert is quite clear about the issue of the relationship between economics and politics:

... the primary task of social movement unionism is the transcendence of the bourgeois separation of politics and economics which needs to be understood in the light of the relationships between economy, civil society and the state. The greater the containment of unionism within the collective bargaining system, the greater the social stability of capitalism. That is why new forms of workplace organization and practice that transcend the divide and lock into civil society and the state in new ways pose a threat to capitalist dominance... (Lambert, 1989: 6).

In other words, in opposition to both "bourgeois separation" and to Lenin's conceptualization of trade unions,¹⁵ social movement unionism transcends the artificial economics-politics separation.¹⁶ It is this issue, perhaps more than any other, which distinguishes social movement unionism from Leninism.

The third point of Waterman is that social movement unionism must be linked with other social movements. I think there are three levels to this: conceptual, ideological, and empirical. Conceptually, I do not think there is any problem, since the very understanding that workers' struggles are just one

14. Although Waterman does not accept the theoretical separation between the economy and political realms of society, as he suggests Lenin and Lambert do, the fact of the matter is that the other types of trade unionism do accept this separation. Therefore, he specifically needs to confront this situation, which he does not do in his writing.

15. Lenin separates economic and political struggles in his conceptualization. In his classic "What Is To Be Done?," in which the communist theory of trade union organization in the period preceding seizure of state power is most developed, Lenin's argument is that trade unions cannot develop beyond the economic aspect of the struggle; to go further, workers must join in revolutionary organizations (Lenin, 1953 -- see particularly Chapter III, "Trade-Unionist Politics and Social Democratic [Communist] Politics:" 259-308).

16. As Amrita Chhachhi reminds me, the real issue is not the separation of the economic and political in the workplace -- because workers' struggles against dominative power in the workplace are immanently political -- but the separation between workplace and the rest of the workers' life-spaces.

of many engaged in efforts to qualitatively change society at least suggests, if it does not demand, that workers' struggles be joined with other struggles. Ideologically, anyone who is fighting against domination and oppression would be the ally of those also fighting domination and oppression.¹⁷ But empirically, there is a potential problem: while desiring to ally with other social movements, what happens if there are none developed or are not yet ready to ally with the workers' movement? Does that mean that a unionism built on this new understanding and which challenges the artificial separation between economics and politics, and which desires to ally with other social movements, does not fit the category of social movement unionism? Does lacking this one feature so radically change its complexion that it must be reconceptualized? I do not think so – and here I think that until Waterman separates the issue into different levels, he is engaged in conceptual overdeterminism.

Lambert's Conception

Rob Lambert also picked three areas which he felt were critical in the definition of social movement unionism: organizationally transcending the traditional political-economic divide, attempting to form structured alliances with social movements, and third, engaging in national campaigns of resistance against the state.

As stated above in considering Waterman's conception of social

17. This raises the crucial point of democracy in movements, and it seems very critical in trying to consider the relationship between communist vanguard parties, and other social movements. Ideologically, communist parties are allies in fighting capitalist domination and oppression; in reality, they are merely trying to replace the capitalists with their members and/or supporters. And with a system which is based on hierarchy and authoritarianism -- democratic centralism -- any "post-revolutionary" system of power in which the communists are dominant would itself be dominating and oppressive, and thus opposed to the social movements.

This suggests a strategy, since most people would agree that the domination and oppression of the existing system is of more immediate concern than the possible domination and oppression of a future system, although future possibilities cannot be ignored: that while the communists are challenging the current system they should not be conceived as enemies, but that social movements work with them only when chosen by the social movements and only when and as long as the communists are willing to work with the social movements on the basis of equality and mutual respect. Social movements should also be working to establish structures and processes within each social movement which challenge domination and oppression within the social movement itself -- and perhaps the main form of this would be against bureaucratization, although I would not limit it only to this. At the same time, the social movements should publicly put forth their values and ideology, and argue that their conception of the future is much superior to any based on domination and oppression. Thus while challenging the present domination and oppression, the social movements would also be fighting any potential domination and oppression of a "post-revolutionary" system.

And while the above comments were written from the perspective of my understanding of communist practice internationally, they may not be appropriate for local forms of communist practice. While I remain skeptical of communist practice, I recognize that ultimately it is the people in each respective area who must make their own analysis of their specific situation. Nonetheless, I believe the issues of democracy, and the relationship between communists and the social movements (and especially with social movement unions) are crucial issues which must be specifically addressed in every situation.

movement unionism, Lambert considers that transcending the political-economic divide to be the key aspect of social movement unionism. I think that is crucial. However, I do not think Lambert goes far enough in his understanding.¹⁸

I think Lambert's understanding is limited by his traditional conception of the working class. I think he uncritically adopts a Marxist conceptualization and while he tries to surpass its Leninist revision, he does this without challenging the original conceptualization, which I think is a critical flaw. This is evident in two ways.

One, although he and Webster recognize the development of alliance politics in South Africa (Lambert and Webster, 1988: 26-39), they do not suggest any change in their conceptualization of the "working class" because of that. Lambert continues to use the traditional conception of the working class in his papers discussing social movement unionism. Lambert's working class exists overwhelmingly at the workplace or when there is a community-located conception, it is only in regard to consumption issues. Yet without reconceptualizing "working class," a politics based on alliance merely becomes a case of "adding" two subjects rather than merging both into a higher level of understanding and action.

Two, Lambert ignores thinking about how working people identify themselves. Amrita Chhachhi and Renee Pittin, writing about their research with women workers in India and Nigeria respectively, point out that women and men possess multiple identities and that "these identities have a basis in certain objective structures of class, caste, ethnic or racial group, gender, region, etc." They continue with a description of how this affects behavior with an example of how a female Indian worker in an electronics factory might confront problems in the workplace:

Identities are selectively mobilized in response to economic, social, political and cultural processes. For instance, capital attempts to mobilize the 'feminine' qualities of women workers in world market factories to ensure a docile, dextrous and cheap labour force. Identities are therefore constantly shifting, not only historically, but also at a given point in time. Faced with North Indian racism, a woman from Kerala asserts her identity as a Malayalee; in the next moment, faced with male chauvenism, she asserts her identity as a woman; and in the next hour, confronted with managerial discipline, she asserts her identity as a working class woman. She possesses all of these identities

18. This point was suggested by Peter Waterman in response to an earlier draft of this paper.

and yet she is not reducible to any one of them (Chhachhi and Pittin, 1991: 24-25).¹⁹

By ignoring the understanding of multiple identities, Lambert limits struggles by working people to the workplace and around issues of distribution and consumption issues, prohibiting, if you will, any further possible political involvement by the working people.

But from looking at Lambert's understanding of the need to transcend the economic-political separation, we must look at his second point: the need to develop structured relations with social movements. I disagree with Lambert on this point. Again, just as I criticized Waterman's formulation on this relationship, I think Lambert is overemphasizing the role of the relationship between the unions and the social movements. I can understand the logic so as to why he does this: he thinks it is necessary for trade unions to reconceptualize their factory organization, ideological input, and the nature of collective action. He feels this is only possible within a structured alliance with the social movements, and that "spontaneously generated, non-permanent links" with social movements do not necessarily result in fundamental organizational and ideological change which he thinks is necessary.

While he does not specifically say that this organizational and ideological change is impossible without a structured alliance with the social movements, he comes very close. He strongly implies it is because of this relationship that the unions make these fundamental changes. Again, I do not think this is true— and my research from the Philippines contradicts this claim (see Scipes, n.d.).

The third point, engaging in national campaigns of mass-based resistance against the state, follows very much the second. It implies the unions cannot be transformed into social movement unions without this national struggle. First of all, I do not think it is true. Second of all, it ignores the various power relationships, and does not ascertain if the unions (and other social movements) have the power to struggle against the state in a nationwide campaign and to be able to withstand any repression which might logically result, or not. If the unions cannot take on that level of struggle at a particular time, but are moving toward being able to do so, are they not social movement unions? If it is a matter of power, and they do not have it at a particular stage of development, does this mean we have to reconceptualize their existence? And again, I do not think so.

19. Chhachhi and Pittin do not limit identities to just the workplace. They note, "The separation of private and public, of factory and home, of personal and political creates misleading dichotomies," and then they quote Donna Haraway:

If it was ever possible ideologically to characterize women's lives by the distinction of public and private domains -- suggested by images of the division of working class life into factory and home, of bourgeois life into market and home, and of gender existence into personal and political realms -- it is now a totally misleading ideology, even to show how both terms of these dichotomies construct each other in practice and theory. I prefer a network ideological image, suggesting the profusion of spaces and identities, and the permeability of boundaries in the personal body and the body politic (Haraway, 1990: 212, quoted in Chhachhi and Pittin: 25).

Having presented the main points of the discussion, and discussed each of them, I will now put forth my conceptualization of social movement unionism. After that, I will present a case study of the KMU Labor Center of the Philippines which will provide evidence of the power of this conceptualization.

New Conceptualization of Social Movement Unionism

My conceptualization of social movement unionism incorporates the strengths of both Waterman's and Lambert's conceptions and goes beyond them, both in instrumental form as well as in theoretical basis:

Social movement unionism is a type of trade unionism which differs from the traditional forms of both economic and political unionism. Social movement unionism specifically rejects the artificial separation between politics and economics which is accepted by the other types of trade unionism. Social movement unionism sees workers' struggles as merely one of many efforts to qualitatively change society, and not either the only site for political struggle and social change or even the primary site. Therefore, social movement unionism seeks alliances with other social movements on an equal basis, and tries to join them in practice when possible, both within the country and internationally.

Social movement unionism is trade unionism based in the workplace and is democratically controlled by the membership and not by any external organization, and recognizes that the struggle for control over workers' daily worklife, pay, and conditions is intimately connected with and cannot be separated from the national socio-political-economic situation. This requires that struggles to improve the situation of workers confront the national situation -- combining struggles against exploitation and oppression in the workplace with those confronting domination both external from and internal to the larger society -- as well as any dominating relations within the unions themselves. Therefore, social movement unionism is autonomous from capital, the state, and political parties, setting its own agenda from its own particular perspective, yet willing to consider modifying its perspective on the basis of negotiations with the social movements with which it is allied with and which it has equal relations.

This conceptualization recognizes social movement unionism as being not only a different type of trade unionism, but is based on a different understanding of the working class and its organization in the struggle to transform society. This type transcends the traditional economic-political divide of society, which is common to both the bourgeois and the Leninist conceptions. This type is based on democratic control by the membership within the unions, and on rejecting any external control. And social movement unions are willing to ally with social movements on the basis of equal relations, and even consider modifying its particular perspective through negotiations. Additionally, social movement unionism's conception of internationalism is built on solidarity relations, supporting those challenging

dominative power at work and throughout every society.²⁰

Ramifications of this New Conceptualization

Conceptualizing trade unionism in this manner has several ramifications. First, it again consciously conceives of workers' struggles as being directed against dominative power, and consciously joins workers with all other people in the struggle for emancipation. Second, it sees workers' struggles as integrated with all other struggles against dominative power -- thus the separation of labor from other social movements is ended. And third, it does not limit this model of trade unionism to workers in the LEDCs, it is one which allows workers anywhere to adopt it.

The last point, in turn, gives an entire new thrust to labor internationalism. Any challenge to dominative power has the opportunity to concretely support struggles for emancipation around the world.²¹ Thus, building a new labor movement on the model of social movement unionism would be a major contribution to emancipatory struggles wherever they might take place.

And now that I have discussed the debate, put forth my contribution, and argued that it provides a better type of trade unionism than we currently have, it is time to consider a case study so as to be able to see if this conceptualization has any basis in reality.

20. One very clear example whereby labor internationalism is being carried out on the larger level is the struggle by the KMU labor center of the Philippines to rid that country of the US military bases. While this is obviously in their own interest, they see it as an international contribution to the well-being of the world's peoples. They know that since 1898, every time the US intervenes in Asia, it has used the Philippine bases to project its power. For more information on this, see Scipes, n.d.

21. An example which shows the potential of this labor internationalism, even though it was carried out by economic type trade unions, is that of national and international unions in North America organizing under the banner of the National Labor Committee for Human Rights and Democracy in Central America. They were able to successfully challenge the international policy of the AFL-CIO on Nicaragua in the mid-1980s. I believe that had the AFL-CIO been able to carry out its traditional foreign policy unopposed, it would have emboldened the Reagan Administration to invade Nicaragua. Thus, the National Labor Committee's contribution to the prevention of a US invasion of Nicaragua, in my opinion, was significant.

The *Kilusang Mayo Uno* (KMU) of the Philippines: A Case Study²²

The KMU is only one of five different labor formations in the Philippines – the others are a group of federations affiliated with the Soviet-dominated World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), the Federation of Free Workers (FFW), the *Lakas Manggagawa* (Workers' Strength) Labor Center (LMLC), and the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP). While the WFTU-affiliated federations are considered by the KMU to be politically "progressive," the FFW and LMLC are considered to be "moderates," while the TUCP is "conservative." In addition to these, there are independent unions arrayed across the political spectrum. And while these political designations are often collapsed into the categories of "genuine" and "yellow" by the KMU – the former progressive and the latter reactionary – the different formations will sometimes unite tactically on different issues, particularly regarding economic wage demands, while remaining politically opposed to each other.

Why did the KMU develop? What were the conditions which caused workers to create it? What has enabled it to survive and grow?

There were three reasons to found the KMU. First, workplace conditions were terrible, with management domination so strong that workers were almost completely at the mercy of their bosses. Second, the traditional unions had sold out workers. And third, there was a clear need for a workers' organization which would organize against foreign domination; as long as the country remained subservient to foreign interests, it would be unable to develop and confront the problems that faced its people.

The *Kilusang Mayo Uno*

KMU was founded on May 1, 1980, during the dark days of the Marcos dictatorship. The seven founding union organizations had 35,000 members under collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) at the time, with an additional 15,000 as members but without CBAs.²³ After 10 years, there were already 350,000 members under CBAs and another 400,000 workers without CBAs

22. Although I examine the KMU in this paper, and suggest it provides evidence for this model of social movement unionism, this is a theoretical conceptualization I am using to understand the KMU and not a term that the KMU has adopted to describe itself. Therefore, I bear all responsibility for any application of this conceptualization to the KMU. However, Rob Lambert has also used the KMU as an example of social movement unionism (Lambert, 1990).

This case study is from my manuscript currently under consideration by a publisher (Scipes, n.d.). The cut-off date for my study was May 1, 1990, so I do not review events which have taken place after that date.

23. Interview with KMU Chairperson Crispin Beltran, May 2, 1990 in Manila. All interviews were conducted by me in the course of my research on the KMU.

who were under the KMU.²⁴

But there is obviously more to the KMU than just size or even membership growth. How did the KMU survive the repression of a dictator -- including the arrest and detention of its chairperson, general secretary, and almost a hundred other top leaders? How could the organization continue after the assassination of its subsequent chairperson, suffering massive human rights violations, and almost total opposition from the military and the ruling class? Where did the KMU find the strength to be able to lead and win two national general workers' strikes within nine years of its founding?

Part of the KMU's power to endure is related to its basic principles of being genuine, militant, and nationalist. A top leader interviewed in 1986, who did not want his name used, explained what these principles mean to members of the KMU:

By "genuine," we mean that the KMU is run by its members. The members are given all information and decide the policies which run the organization. By "militant," we mean that the KMU will never betray the interest of the working class, even at the risk of our own lives. The KMU believes workers become aware of their own human dignity through collective mass action. By "nationalist," we believe the wealth of the Philippines belongs to the Filipino people and that national sovereignty must never be compromised. The KMU is against the presence of the US bases (quoted from Scipes, 1987: 12).

In other words, the KMU is class conscious, believes that workers learn more from mass struggles than from leaders cutting back room deals, and is determined that Filipinos should control the Philippines.

The statement about never betraying the interests of the working class, even at the risk of KMU leaders' own lives, is not hyperbole; many KMU organizers, leaders, and members have been arrested and/or killed. The torture and murder of KMU Chairperson Rolando Olalia in November 1986 demonstrated the risks involved in being a genuine trade unionist even for those highest in the organization.

Another key aspect to the KMU's survival and growth is the organization's political concept of "genuine trade unionism" (GTU). This concept extends the scope of trade unionism beyond mere relations in the workplace;

24: Interview with a member of KMU's International Department on April 16, 1990 in Manila.

KMU's numerical size, while the largest labor center in the country, is still quite small in proportion to the number of workers in the society. In 1987, 40.76% of the labor force of 15.58 million workers -- 9.06 million -- were employed as wage/salary workers. "Of the wage/salary earners, 2.1 million or 23% were organized into unions, of which only 346 thousand worked under a collective bargaining agreement" (Ecumenical Institute for Labor Education and Research, 1988: 2). (Obviously, the KMU had been quite successful between the writing of this book, which they use as their key educational document, and 1990.) Nonetheless, KMU's location in strategic parts of the economy and its alliances with other social movements give it a power considerably beyond its numerical size.

it also includes struggles over the political economy of the nation and its internal social relations. KMU-affiliated unions have developed this concept to the greatest extent in the Philippines, although it is not limited to them.

Genuine trade unionism opposes domination from without. It is against imperialist interference in the Philippines from particular nations such as the US or Japan, to institutions such as the IMF, the WB, and the AFL-CIO.

It is this involvement in the debate over the future direction and shape of the nation — together with the KMU's increasing ability to interfere with economic production due to its position in the nation's workplaces — that makes it such an important subject for examination and understanding.

Further organizational strengths are to be found in the internal processes within KMU-affiliated organizations: the KMU is committed to union democracy and accountability of its membership. It requires sacrifices from leaders and fights internal corruption. The KMU is controlled by its membership and not by any other organization from the left or the right.

Along with being genuine, militant, and nationalist, developing GTU and being democratically controlled, the KMU has developed because of three other factors.

Organizational Structure

The first factor has to do with the particular structure in which the KMU is organized. The KMU is organized both "vertically," with centralized national federations, and "horizontally," by workers' alliances. This organizational grid overlays the entire organization.

Ever-national federations — similar to national or international unions in North America — are affiliated with the KMU. These are hierarchical organizations, with decision-making at a higher level superceding that made at lower levels. Each federation contains at least ten local unions.

These federations have a general membership; they organize any workers they can, although most federations seem to concentrate on one or two particular "industries." The National Federation of Sugar Workers-Food and General Trades (NFSW-FGT) concentrates on sugar workers. *Ilaw at Buklod ng Manggagawa* (IBM: Light and Unity of the Workers), is concentrated among employees of the San Miguel Corporation, a giant beer and food conglomerate. The Genuine Labor Organization of Workers in the Hotel, Restaurant and Allied Industries (GLOWHRAIN) focuses on workers in hotels and restaurants. The Drug and Food Alliance of the Philippines (DFA) is in pharmaceuticals. The Alliance of Nationalist and Genuine Labor Organizations (ANGLO) emphasizes garments and textiles, while the United Workers of the Philippines (UWP) and the Association of Democratic Labor Organizations (ADLO) are in garments and shoes. The Southern Philippines Federation of Labor (SPFL) focuses on mining and the wood industry, while the National Federation of Labor Unions (NAFLU) is in mining and longshoring.

The National Federation of Labor (NFL) concentrates on the service industry and banana plantations, and the Organized Labor Association in Line Industries and Agriculture (OLALIA) is concentrated among agricultural workers. This situation results in some duplication but it also gives local unions a choice of federations to affiliate with, ensuring more responsive leadership.

Each federation provides legal assistance, orientation, directions for education, and plans of action — in coordination with the KMU — to their local union affiliates. In particular, federations give crucial assistance in workers' struggles to form local unions. They also help to gain recognition through winning certification elections and successfully completing collective bargaining agreements.

Local unions can affiliate with a federation by one of two different ways. A previously organized local union may join a federation "indirectly." A group of workers seeking help in organizing may join "directly." George Aguilon, secretary general of NAMAHEMIN, explained that: "In reality, there is no big difference. The only difference is that if you have indirectly affiliated, you can [leave the federation] at any time; if you are directly affiliated, you must wait until the CBA expires before you can disaffiliate."²⁵

The large majority of local unions are directly affiliated, meaning they must remain with their chosen federation throughout the life of the contract. Since the passage of the Hererra Law (RA 6715) in March 1989, this is a five-year period.

Besides additional membership, status, and, therefore, power, affiliation brings in dues for the federation. For example, before it disaffiliated from the United Lumber and General Workers of the Philippines (ULGWP), the union at Greenfields was the ULGWP's largest local union. Greenfields is a garment factory in Metro Manila, with 2,500 union members and another 500 workers paying agency dues for the union's representation of them with management. At Greenfields, workers were paying monthly dues of 10 pesos, three of which went to the local and seven to the federation. In addition to these dues, the federation won a P10,000 a month education fee in the contract, which the company paid to the federation. From this one factory, the federation was receiving P31,000 a month, over one million pesos over a three-year period.²⁶

25. Interview with George Aguilon, April 28, 1988 in Davao City. NAMAHEMIN is a geographical alliance covering Davao City, and Davao del Sur and North Cotabato provinces, all on the island of Mindanao.

26. Interview with Lucena Flores and Beda Villanueva, president and secretary general respectively, of the United Workers of the Philippines, June 21, 1989 in Manila. Villanueva was also the president of the Greenfields Workers' Union.

The leadership of the ULGWP had unilaterally and illegally disaffiliated from the KMU, without the permission of the National Executive Council. The majority of local unions then left the ULGWP, re-united into the United Workers of the Philippines, and re-affiliated with the KMU in early 1989.

However, despite the hierarchical organization of these federations, they are decentralized as much as possible. Federations are broken into island-wide and region-wide groupings, with the power to make decisions delegated to the lowest possible level of the organization.

This decentralized structure diffuses power throughout the organization. Immobilizing the top leaders will not stop the organization. Marcos's effort in 1982 to cripple the KMU by arresting its sixty-nine key leaders, including the chairperson and secretary general, failed because of the KMU's decentralized organization.

Besides the hierarchically-structured federations,²⁷ there are the alliances. Alliances are "horizontal" coalitions of workers from different workplaces and unions, and are organized on the basis of geography, industry, or company ownership. The goal of each alliance is to unite workers for economic gain; provide self-defense from military harassment; win political demands outside the workplaces; and give GTU education to all members.

Additionally, there is also an organization of women workers, the *Kilusang Manggagawang Kababaihan* (KMK: Women Workers' Movement), which is affiliated with KMU and is another type of alliance, this one based on gender. The KMK has 20,000 members. It has specifically been challenging women's oppression within the workplace, society, and the unions. In 1989, its program focused on winning greater maternity leave benefits for all women, establishing day care facilities in workplaces, ending sexual harassment, and solving health problems of women workers in the factories.²⁸

Alliances are a totally new development in Filipino trade unionism, having just been established in 1982. The first alliance, AMBA-BALA, was created by the overwhelmingly female workforce in the Bataan Export Processing Zone (BEPZ) in response to military repression against strikers at the Inter-Asia Company during June 1982. I reported an interview with Flor Collantes of AMBA-BALA which described events which led to the creation of that KMU provincial alliance:

The workers had gone on strike to protest intensification of their work; previously each worker operated four machines in the textile plant; management increased this to six. The military intervened

27. There is a certain level of dissatisfaction within the KMU concerning the federation structure. It can put federation leadership in opposition to the larger needs of the KMU, sometimes blocking further development of the KMU. While I do not personally know of any particular situations, Rob Lambert has told me that there is dissatisfaction within the KMU leadership over this issue, and they are trying to work this out. From what I know, I would guess there is some conflict between those who want to form industrial federations and those who want to maintain the general federation structure. To form industrial federations, the general federations would have to give up some of their members and it possibly might even mean the dissolution of some general federations.

28. For an interview with Cleofe Zapanta, secretary general of the KMK, see Scipes, 1990b.

against the strikers, using fire trucks, truncheons, and mass arrests in an effort to break the strike.

Although strikes in the zone were illegal, other workers realized that if they allowed the military to break that strike, then the military could break any strike. Further, they realized that BEPZ was a key component of the IMF/WB/Marcos development strategy for the country, and thus union organization there would have a much greater importance than in less economically strategic areas.

The women organized clandestinely on the job, in the company-provided dormitories, and in the community. Workers in every factory in the zone were mobilized. On June 4, 1982, 26,000 workers walked out in support of the nine union organizers that had been fired by Inter-Asia and the fifty-four arrested picketers.

This was the first general strike in any export processing zone in the world and it was successful: the strike was won, the union organizers reinstated, the people in jail released, and the first alliance, AMBA-BALA [literally meaning "AIM-BULLET"], was born (quoted from Scipes, 1988).

Each type of alliance organizes differently. Geographical alliances combine unions on the basis of locality and are the most powerful; these alliances can be formed on national, island, regional, province, city, or even district levels. Industrial alliances unite unions located in the same industry, such as health care, transportation, or mining. Conglomerate alliances join unions in multi-site workplaces owned by the same company. The industrial and conglomerate alliances focus more on workplace issues, while geographical alliances tend to focus on larger political issues -- but transportation alliances have always been very involved on the political level as well. Additionally, while most alliances are affiliated with the KMU, each alliance often includes unions from outside the KMU.

Education

In conjunction with an innovative organizational structure that reinforces its member unions, the KMU has a very developed trade union education program. It serves as perhaps the key component in leadership development. And not only is the program extensive, but the leadership of all KMU organizations strongly stresses the education process.

Known by the general name of "genuine trade unionism," the KMU education program is composed of three different courses: PAMA, GTU, and KPD.

PAMA is a one-day introductory course, which is short enough that organizers can give basic educational training even on picketlines. In this course, workers are taught not only trade union rights and responsibilities, but political economy as well. Surplus value is explained in a way all workers can understand. The term "imperialism" is demystified and shown to be a key explanation for the economic degradation and poverty of their country.

Gaining national sovereignty is clearly shown to be an important part of the workers' struggle for liberation.

The three-day GTU course goes into greater detail. Workers discuss the problems of labor. They examine and analyze the differences between genuine trade unionism on one hand, and "yellow" unionism -- whether of the "bread and butter/rice and fish" version or its more collaborationist form -- on the other. They focus on the history of the Filipino labor movement and previous efforts to develop genuine trade unions. And workers discuss the struggle for national and working class liberation.

The third course, KPD, propagates the national democratic program.²⁹ Originally part of the GTU course, KPD has been further developed on its own. This focuses attention on the struggle for national democracy, which includes joining with different political forces fighting for national sovereignty. The goal of national democracy is the establishment of a truly independent country and a national democratic coalition government, based on the various sectors of society such as peasants, workers, fisherfolk, women, urban poor, students, etc.³⁰

Though these courses were formally developed in Metro Manila at the Ecumenical Institute for Labor Education and Research (EILER), a church-based organization, they were created in response to the high priority placed on member education at the KMU's founding congress in 1980. These courses were developed in the field -- on picket lines and at union meetings -- and brought back to Manila for integration and development at EILER. They were then taken back into the field, tested, and then further modified when necessary.

Education centers have been established throughout the country. Each KMU federation has an education department, as do most KMU geographic alliances. Making information available and accessible to workers is their goal.

This information is not just for KMU members. In Bataan, workers demanded that all members of the provincial alliance -- even unions affiliated with other labor centers -- be given genuine trade unionism education. This

29. National democracy is generally seen as a stage preceding socialism. The national democratic movement in the Philippines includes both legal and illegal organizations, with the KMU and the other social movements comprising the legal wing, and the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), the New People's Army, and the National Democratic Front comprising the illegal wing. And although these groups are politically seeking similar goals, they are not organizationally united. Additionally, neither of these groupings or "wings" is a monolithic unity, but comprises a wide range of politics and outlooks within each wing and within each organization.

30. One of the interesting things about the KMU's conception of a national democratic coalition government is that it is based on social sector representation -- peasants, workers, women, etc. -- and not by political party. When I asked Primo Amparo, chairperson of the AMBA-BALA alliance in Bataan whether or not the CPP would have any representation in their conception of government, he replied, "If they are in the sectors. [There] will be no party; it must be [by] sectoral representatives." Interview with Primo Amparo, April 14, 1990, in Mariveles, Bataan.

seems to be the case in most alliances. Also, in some areas, independent education programs have been established, such as the Visayas Institute for Research and Trade Union Education in Cebu, which serves any union in the Visayas region.

This education process is one of the main differences between KMU organizations and those controlled by other labor groupings. The KMU tries to develop workers' understanding in order to get them involved in confronting their problems and the problems of the country. It uses every opportunity to educate workers, whether trying to win certification elections during respective "freedom periods" or helping workers take control over their own union to make it militant.

Key to this education process is the way it is run. Rather than just telling workers what they should think or do, KMU educators have developed curricula which enable workers to share their thoughts on various issues and discuss alternatives. It is through open discussion and input from the instructors that workers educate themselves and each other.

The importance of this education simply cannot be exaggerated. It brings workers together, away from the worksite. It allows them to think about and discuss what they want and how they can best achieve their goals. It also allows them to interact with one another, building solidarity within the organization.

The most important result is the general empowerment of workers. Once workers have been through an education course, they get a real sense of themselves and what they are doing. While this sounds abstract, it comes through concretely in their determination in their particular struggles; maintaining a twenty-four-hour picketline for over a year during a strike is common.

These courses also encourage workers to develop their own courses. For example, the IGMC Workers' Union in the BEPZ developed a course for their members on the capitalist relations of production in their firm. Why is production arranged in the manner it is? What is the company trying to do? How are they able to do it? What can the union do to strengthen itself? Those are some of the questions that their course focused on. The union had put all of its 700-plus members through the course by early 1986.

Relations with Other Sectoral Organizations

In the Philippines, national democrats within each sector of society -- such as workers, peasants, fisherfolk, women, urban poor, and students -- have developed organizations to meet their specific needs. These are known as sectoral organizations.

Joining with sectoral organizations to fight for demands that would benefit the entire population of the Philippines and refusing to limit KMU's

interests only to workers and their problems is another key factor in the KMU's development. Benefitting from this cross-sectoral unity, the people of the Philippines have been able to develop a tactic called a *welgang bayan* (people's strike), which is even more powerful than the almost mythic "general strike" in industrialized countries.

A *welgang bayan* includes a general workers' strike, but it is much more. In addition, all public transportation is stopped, all shops and stores are closed, and community members set up barricades in the streets or join workers on their picketlines.

The first *welgang bayan* took place in Davao City, Mindanao in 1984. The concerted actions of the people in protest of increased military operations and brutality on the island paralyzed the city. Two more island-wide people's strikes were launched during 1985, again protesting the militarization of the island. The third people's strike was so successful that when the island's military commander asked the leaders to call it off after one day, they refused. "We will call it off when we reach our objectives," a leader told him.³¹ The *welgang bayan* lasted three days.

How did this tactic develop? Erasto "Nonoy" Librado, secretary general of KMU-Mindanao, explained that leaders from different sectoral organizations had noticed very little response to their efforts to win their particular demands. They began talking to see if together they could all be more successful. Their efforts paid off with a tactic that, while difficult to mobilize properly, was incredibly powerful when launched.³²

In May 1985, the various sectoral organizations, including the KMU, organized into a national alliance called the *Bagong Alyansang Makabayan* (BAYAN: New Patriotic Alliance). BAYAN, which means "people" or "country," is organized on a national level and it has local chapters in most major urban areas throughout the country.

The next significant people's strike took place in Bataan against the Westinghouse-built Bataan Nuclear Power Plant in 1985. This power plant, built on the side of a volcano in an active earthquake zone, was intended to supply electricity to the US military bases, Clark and Subic, and to the export processing zone in Mariveles. The *welgang bayan* was described:

Several major protests have been launched against the plant. The largest was the three-day province-wide strike in June 1985. Eight towns were brought to a standstill. All banks, shops, schools, public transport, private businesses and government offices shut down. Even fishing boats in the local port refused to put out to sea. Workers from the industrial free trade zone, where the factories of the multinationals are located, marched for two days to join the protests. Workers blocked all roads to the nuclear power plant and grappled with

31. Interview in Manila in January 1986 with a person who requested that I not use his name.

32. Interview with Erasto "Nonoy" Librado, April 30, 1990 in Davao City.

armoured cars sent to clear a way through (quoted from Watts and Jackson, 1986).

The first nationwide *welgang bayan* was launched in August 1987 in response to an oil price hike by the government. Although called off early in response to a military coup attempt, the effort had immobilized 95% of the country beforehand. Interestingly, the next military coup attempt took place after plans for another nationwide people's strike had been announced but before it could be launched in December 1989.

A *welgang bayan* is evidence of a recognition by progressive Filipinos that they can gain much more together than they can alone. It also shows KMU's recognition that labor must be involved in national issues that affect other sectors because these issues also affect workers as well.

International Solidarity Work

International solidarity is an area in which the KMU has placed much emphasis and the result is that KMU is quite advanced in this work.³³

From the beginning, the KMU has seen itself as part of the international workers' movement, not separate. This can be seen through its regular publications which always include stories about workers' struggles in other countries; the international travels of high ranking officers; the convening of a European-wide labor conference in London in February 1986; and the establishment of foreign support groups such as the Philippine Workers Support Committees in the United States and the Trade Union Committee of Britain's Philippine Support Group. These efforts provide venues for the KMU to propagate its program and have it challenged internationally. They are meant to seek new forms of international workers' solidarity.

The KMU has recognized the importance of international linkages. For the KMU, these networks serve as a source of funds for the organization and provide "legitimacy," moral support, and some protection from repression. On the other hand, foreign labor movements have provided massive funding for labor organizations opposed to the KMU; the TUCP, for example, received over \$5.7 million from the AFL-CIO between 1983 and '88 (International Labour Reports, 1989), and it and its affiliates have also received considerable amounts of money from the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions

33. The KMU's international work has focused on building solidarity with workers in the "South" and "West" of the world; because of its previous acceptance of "socialism" in the "East" -- see the section below on "KMU's Ideology" -- it has concentrated on building solidarity with various political model-based labor organizations in "socialist" countries instead of with workers. Obviously, this situation can no longer be rationalized. It will be interesting to see how the KMU works to build solidarity with workers in Eastern Europe.

These comments are limited to the KMU's efforts to build solidarity with workers in the South and West.

and the German foundation, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES).³⁴

The international solidarity work of the KMU has been built on seeking recognition from and building linkages with foreign labor movements, while challenging the international "legitimacy" and funding of its opponents. To date, the KMU has won especially strong support from the national labor centers in Australia, New Zealand, and Ireland, and from the CGIL in Italy and the CGT and CFDT in France, and numerous local unions in Europe. This is in addition to its close ties with COSATU in South Africa, CUT in Brazil, and the KTUC in South Korea. In addition, KMU sent delegates to participate in an Indian Ocean/Pacific Ocean trade union meeting in Perth, Australia in May 1991, which brought together progressive unions from South Africa, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Australia, and the Philippines.

The KMU maintains regular communications with its supporters around the world through monthly publications. Originally, *KMU Correspondence* was published ten times a year and *KMU International Bulletin*, which was much more detailed, was published twice a year. However, in 1988, the KMU dropped the *KMU International Bulletin* and began producing *KMU Correspondence* on a monthly basis. This journal has improved with time, and is quite informative, and well laid out. It keeps its readers informed of the current situation in the country and KMU's positions on numerous national and international issues.

However, KMU's conception of international solidarity is not just urging support for itself. In almost every issue of *KMU Correspondence*, there is a call for solidarity with workers in countries around the world.

Perhaps the KMU's major effort to build international solidarity is through hosting its annual International Solidarity Affair (ISA). As far as I know, the ISA is a unique effort. Every year since 1984, the KMU has invited workers and labor leaders to travel to the Philippines and experience first-hand the situation of Filipino workers through a ten-day program. This experience does not show visitors how wonderful conditions are in the Philippines, but it gives them an accurate understanding of the situation in which the KMU operates.

I participated in the 1988 ISA, along with workers and labor leaders from Australia, New Zealand, England, France, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, Canada, and the United States. (There were also Japanese workers there but, because of translation needs, they had a separate program.) Some of the "delegates" were officially representing their organization, while some were there on their own initiative.

34. There seems to be a strong effort by both the US Government and the FES to keep the KMU away from the new independent unions which are emerging throughout Asia. Obviously, they do not want KMU to "contaminate" these new unions with genuine trade unionism. I think people should be able to contact KMU directly, so they can make up their own minds: Klusang Mayo Uno, 3rd Floor, Jopson Building, 510 M. Earnshaw St., Sampaloc, Metro Manila, Philippines.

Preparation was extensive. Prior to traveling to the Philippines, most people received an orientation program which acquainted them with the country, and suggested what they would experience and what they might take with them. The KMU solicited each delegate's preferences for where he or she wanted to travel and what specific interest each delegate had. In addition, each delegate received information about how to act when in workers' communities, what type of clothing was appropriate, and how to donate money to an organization should they desire to do so.³⁵

Once in the Philippines, the delegates received a tremendous amount of additional information. The KMU had prepared "orientation packets" for each delegate, in which each person was given an overview of the national situation and the KMU's position on specific national issues such as the US bases, and specific information on the region he or she would visit.

The importance that the KMU placed on the ISA was evident. There was an impressive opening celebration in which some of the foreign delegates actively participated. Philippine Senator Wigberto Tañada was the keynote speaker. Speeches were also given by KMU chairperson Crispin Beltran and other leaders. The event was covered in the national media. And throughout the entire ten-day program, delegates had extensive access to high-level KMU leaders.

After the formal ceremonies, the delegates were informed where they would be visiting. The group was divided by destination and the guides gave their charges a "situationer" (situation report) for the area in which they would be traveling. I was traveling to Mindanao with Philip Statham, an Australian trade union official, and we were given a three-hour situationer by the deputy secretary general of KMU-Mindanao, Joel Maglunsod, which was extremely useful.

Early the next morning, we left for Mindanao. Over the next three days, we visited a number of workplaces, picketlines, and a banana plantation. These travels were intensified by the presence of vigilante units -- death squads -- which were deployed in numerous checkpoints around Davao City.³⁶ We talked with the widow and son of Peter Alderite, who had been hacked to death with bolo knives by vigilantes in front of the union office on the plantation the year before. We talked with workers at each site, and had numerous conversations with high-ranking KMU leaders. We met with the presidents of the forty KMU local unions in the regional alliance. And after being invited to a press conference announcing upcoming Labor Day activities -- where we were both interviewed for TV, radio, and newspapers -- we returned to Manila.

35. And while these may seem to be "small" issues, building international solidarity on the basis of mutual respect despite vast differences in personal and organizational wealth, and not a patron-client relationship, demands that attention be paid to issues such as these.

36. For an extensive discussion about the vigilante units, see Scipes, *n.d.*

On May Day, we marched in the streets with approximately 150,000 Filipino workers.

The ISA is a model for successfully building international solidarity on a rank and file basis. The program removes labor solidarity from the hands of the labor bureaucrats and allows workers to learn first-hand about conditions facing workers in another country. Because of the cost — plane fare to and from the Philippines, \$350 for the basic ISA program plus air transport within the country, as needed — it is limited to workers and officials from more economically developed countries, although the KMU has made special appeals at different times to raise money for delegates from "Third World" countries.

The concept, however, of workers visiting other workers and learning about their specific situation, seems like one which could be carried out by labor organizations in any country. It also serves to let workers in the "host" country know that they are not alone, that workers in other countries are interested in their struggles, and are willing to spend time and money to learn more about the situation facing the host-country workers.

It is the time, energy, and money put into building international solidarity that has made the KMU's international work so extremely well done.

Critique of KMU

However, there are several issues which need to be raised, both to help point out weaknesses and to suggest areas needing additional attention in order to further strengthen the organization. In this section, comments will be made on KMU's ideology and the charges that it is a front for the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), on the position of women within the organization, and on its lack of an anti-bureaucratic focus. These comments are not considered to be exhaustive, but are meant as introductory remarks on these various issues.

KMU's Ideology

The KMU has been repeatedly charged with being a front for the CPP. By labeling it as a front, violence and repression against the KMU is therefore "legitimized" within the middle and upper classes in a society which, like that of the United States, is strongly anti-communist.

Despite the charges, no one has ever proven that the KMU is controlled by the CPP; even Ferdinand Marcos, with all his powers and having a subservient judiciary at his disposal, could not prove this allegation. The KMU has repeatedly denied it is a front for the CCP. A number of KMU leaders have been arrested and detained on charges of "subversion" and "rebellion," which are in reality charges of belonging to the CPP and, as far as I know, the

charges have never been sustained against them in a court of law. KMU leaders have been investigated time and again by government agencies, and have not been shown to be members of the party. KMU chairperson Crispin Beltran also has stated specifically that this is not true.³⁷

On the other hand, the Aquino government has been dealing with the KMU as a responsible organization and includes the KMU in its Labor Advisory and Consultative Council.

Yet the charges of being a communist front keep getting made. These charges could lead people to believe that there must be something there, despite the fact that no credible evidence has been presented, on the belief that "where there is smoke, there is fire."

I have thoroughly researched this issue over the past five years, in an effort to ascertain whether the KMU is one development of a new kind of trade unionism or whether it is a product of a very sophisticated communist party. I have talked with workers, union activists, organizers, and top leaders of the KMU, leaders of anti-KMU unions, academics, church activists and clergy, community organizers, as well as journalists; some singly and others in small groups. I have read material by the KMU -- as well as the excellent *GTU: Course on Genuine Trade Unionism*, developed by the EILER, which the KMU uses as its basic educational document -- and have evaluated claims by people politically from both the left and right of the KMU.

In addition to this, in conversations with KMU leaders, I have specifically inquired about the organizational decision-making processes and development. Both of these factors are key to gaining insight as to how an organization functions internally. From this research, which has also included attending local union and regional federation-wide meetings, I have found that the KMU is run democratically. Union meetings which I have attended have been well attended and debate was vigorous, thoughtful, and critical. Relationships between leaders and members have appeared open and respectful.

There are a range of politics among the various federations, and debates within and among them seem quite lively. Unions have the right to abstain from major campaigns, although obviously, abstention is discouraged. The NFL, for example, was not forced to withdraw from the International Food and Allied Workers' Association (IUF) when three other KMU federations withdrew

37. Interview with Crispin Beltran, May 2, 1990 in Manila.

from the IUF.³⁸ Additionally, the NFL publicly disagreed with the initial KMU analysis of the massacre at Tienanmen Square, and was not forced out of the organization. The KMU is not controlled by "democratic centralism."

Another factor which has been ignored by KMU critics is the way in which the KMU has developed -- a substantial number of organizations and leaders within the KMU came from political positions to the right of the KMU. Out of the eleven federations which are now members, three of them are considered yellow at earlier points in their history, as was the ULGWP before it withdrew; in fact, the IBM only left the TUCP in 1987 to join KMU. AMA-SUGBO, the alliance of Cebu, initially was comprised of nothing but TUCP-affiliated unions. And there is at least one high-ranking KMU leader who once was a regional officer within the TUCP; and I assume there are other formerly high-ranking leaders of yellow organizations now working within the KMU. Especially because of the controversial position of the KMU, it would seem extremely unlikely for these organizations or leaders to move from the right to the left as they have done without seriously investigating the charges against the KMU, and deciding that the KMU was an autonomous organization.

Not only are these charges not supported by specific evidence, but Miriam Golden's (1988) research in Italy has shown that even where a communist party is legal, institutionalized, and has mass electoral support, it "is difficult for the party to control organized labor to the extent that communist unionists are themselves heterogeneous in their policy orientations and *effectively act against their own party*" (emphasis added) (Golden, 1988: 245). It is much more unlikely to have as much or more control in a situation in which the communist party is illegal and where public accusations of being a "communist" can often result -- and unfortunately, have resulted -- in the accused being killed.

In addition to all of this, the KMU's concept of genuine trade unionism -- where the issues of the workplace are seen as an integral part of the national situation, meaning that the economic aspect of the struggle cannot be divorced from the political -- is radically different from that developed under Leninism. When one reads Lenin's classic "What is to be Done?," in which the communist theory of trade union organization in the period preceding seizure of state power is most developed, the reader discovers that Lenin's concept is that trade unions cannot develop beyond the economic aspect of

38. Joe Tampinco, a former officer of the National Sugar Workers Federation (NFSW)/KMU who had left the NFSW and had helped establish a rival union, was assassinated in July 1988. Dan Gallin, secretary general of the IUF, believing the CPP was behind the assassination, charged the NFSW with "moral complicity" in the killing. He justified this by claiming that since the NFSW was controlled by the CPP, it shared the burden of the assassination. (However, Gallin admitted to the *International Labour Reports* in a February 1989 interview that he did not even have substantial circumstantial evidence to support his claims of "moral complicity" or of CPP control of the NFSW.)

In response to the IUF accusation, which was the latest in a string of controversial issues, three of the four KMU-affiliated unions which had been affiliated with the IUF withdrew from the IUF, claiming that it had politically intervened in their internal affairs, discriminated against them, and tried to split their organizations. For a fuller account of this, see Scipes, n.d.

the struggle; to go further, workers must join revolutionary organizations. Genuine trade unionism specifically denies this dualistic separation of aspects of the struggle for liberation. Once this distinction is understood, then it seems clear that the KMU is not a communist front or even based on a Leninist model.

From the evidence I have seen, I have concluded that the KMU is controlled by its membership and not by any outside organization, whether of the left or right.³⁹ The positions it takes are a result of political struggle within the organization, not from outside; the strengths and weaknesses of the KMU should be attributed to the organization itself and not to any outside forces.

Although I am convinced that the KMU is controlled by its membership and not by any outside organization, the KMU's ideology does apparently give its enemies a hook to hang their hats on.

There is no question that the KMU wants radical change in Philippine society. The KMU is very clear about the need for the national democratic program to be implemented, ending foreign domination, and, based on mass democracy, instituting a coalition government made up of representatives of the various sectors of society. The purpose of the government will be to meet the needs of the Filipino people overall, and not only the needs of the elite or the elite's foreign "associates." By definition, that would mean giving priority to the interests of peasants and workers.

But many in the KMU want to go beyond the national democratic program; they want to achieve socialism. And although they generally want to see workers and peasants running the society, they have yet to concretize what they mean by this.

Like most people in the world who want to see the dispossessed and the disempowered in each society running things, KMU leaders look at the

39. There are communist party members in the KMU, just as there are members of almost every political organization in the country who are also members of the KMU. The essential question is whether members of these external organizations can force the KMU to take positions or carry out activities in opposition to the interests and activities of KMU members as a whole. As stated, I do not think any group within the KMU is strong enough to override the organization, and I have seen no convincing proof that this has been done.

In addition, my personal experiences as an industrial worker, union member, and labor-community activist over a twenty-year period make me very skeptical that one organization can "take over" another without destroying the one taken over. This seems especially unlikely in a situation such as that faced by the KMU, where human rights abuses against trade unionists have been worse under Aquino than under Marcos (see Butler, 1988; Williamson, 1988; and Scipes, 1990a) and whereby organizational survival is so dependent upon membership participation.

It seems incumbent that should anyone claim that the KMU is controlled by an external organization, besides confronting the issues specifically raised in the text, they should also show *how* the KMU is controlled by this external organization over time. In other words, it is insufficient to claim that "Organization X" set up this or that organization, or that a member of "Organization X" is in this or in that position, but the claimant must show how this has been used to force the KMU membership both to accept "X" leadership against its own interests and to maintain its participation.

"socialist" countries -- the Soviet Union, Eastern European countries, China, Cuba, Vietnam, Angola, Nicaragua, and others -- as possible models for the Philippines. And also, like many who want to replace capitalism, KMU leaders seem to have accepted uncritically the statements made by the governments of these various countries as to the true state of affairs within these countries. Accordingly, claims that the working class was running the respective countries, that unemployment, hunger, and inadequate housing had been totally eliminated, and that these countries were democracies were all accepted to greater or lesser extents.

And, in a country where approximately 70% of the people live in poverty, where workers and peasants have been mistreated all their lives, where national needs have been repeatedly sold out to foreign interests, and whose Filipino partners have become incredibly wealthy, these visions were all the more attractive.

Combined with this, Filipino workers and peasants noted that the government attacking them and making their lives even more difficult was the same one which was attacking the "socialist" countries. The US government, which has dominated affairs in the Philippines for so long and has made things so bad for workers and peasants, was leading the attack against the "socialist" countries. So, if their enemy was saying such bad things about these countries, then these attacks must be nothing but lies.

Unfortunately, as events throughout 1989 and '90 conclusively showed, the visions presented by the so-called "socialist" countries were not only false, but they were overwhelmingly rejected by their own peoples. "Socialism" as presented was shown to be a code word for repressive societies, run by communist party hacks, which could not even meet the physical needs of the people for ample food, adequate housing, quality goods and services, and a clean environment. Nor could these societies provide their members with power over their lives; the "people's democracies" were anything but democracies.

Recognizing the true situation of the "socialist" societies, however, does not mean that capitalism is superior. Every capitalist society which has provided many of these basic needs for its population -- the industrialized countries of the "West" -- has been built on the backs of people of color, whether in the "Third World" and/or in internal colonies. This situation cannot be overstated. In addition, workers in industrialized countries from the dominant culture -- whites everywhere but in Japan -- have themselves been tremendously oppressed by the capitalist production process; they have accepted the situation in exchange for a higher standard of living. The maintenance of a differential standard of living has required the further exploitation of people of color, labeled "inferior" by ruling class ideologists. And for people living in the United States today, capitalism is no longer able to meet even the basic economic needs of a vastly increasing proportion of the population.⁴⁰

40. For an in-depth report and analysis of the social situation in the United States, see Scipes, 1991a.

Additionally, capitalism has failed to meet the needs of the vast majority of the people in every country in which it exists but which has not had another people to exploit. Capitalism in the "Third World" has been an overwhelming disaster.

The writings of Marx, Lenin, and their followers presented an alternative vision to the dispossessed. Marx argued that the motorforce of history was class struggle between the oppressed and their oppressors and that, because the oppressed of his time was the proletariat, its efforts to liberate itself were the key to liberating society. Accordingly, the interests of the working class were seen as being superior to all others.

Lenin further developed Marx's line of thought. Lenin thought that an organization of the most advanced elements of the working class was needed to lead that class to liberation. He developed the concept of a communist party, which he helped create in Russia and eventually helped to lead the "victory" in 1917. However, regardless of what Lenin's initial concept might have been of a post-capitalist society, what happened in the Soviet Union after the Bolshevik Revolution was that the communist party consciously destroyed or replaced the organizations of governance created by workers, monopolizing power in society over everyone else.⁴¹

It was this concept of the "vanguard" party which led to much confusion around the world. Communist parties presented themselves as being the "party of the proletariat," of the working class. In reality, after the communists took power, workers did not control anything; all power was confined to each communist party, of which most of the top leaders did not even come from a working class background. And, while different communist leaders around the world have adopted Marx and Lenin's writings to their own specific situations -- for example, Mao recognized the central role of the peasantry in China -- the one commonality is that, in every case, political power in the post-capitalist society has been confined to the revolutionary organization which captured state power.⁴²

So, although communist parties have consistently denied power to workers and peasants, a group which advocates that workers and peasant:

41. Many leftists claim that Bolshevik Party domination over workers took place under Stalin and not under Lenin; in other words, the problem was not the system established by the Bolsheviks under Lenin but merely a deformation of what was inherently a good system.

Other leftists accept that the problems occurred under Lenin, but blame them on the conditions of civil war in the country when thirty-three allied nations invaded the new Soviet Union.

In an excellent article which examined the various writings on the subject, Don Fitz conclusively showed that the problems were of the system established and carried out by the Bolsheviks under Lenin, and not because of the civil war or of Stalinism: "... the groundwork for undermining workers' self-management was laid by the end of 1917, less than eight weeks after the Bolshevik seizure of power and six months prior to the beginning of the civil war" (emphasis added). Don Fitz, 1990: 38.

42. The situation in Nicaragua, whereby the ruling Sandinista party transferred state power after losing the national elections in early 1990, is the exception. And obviously the US war by Contra-proxies was a factor in this. Nonetheless, the Sandinistas held power for almost eleven years.

should run society is still labeled "communist."

A major part of the problem, which allows opponents to label the KMU as communist is that the KMU has not emphasized how its vision of a new society differs from that of the CPP or of traditional communist efforts. I believe that the KMU sees the CPP as being part of the pro-people forces and has not emphasized its differing vision because it does not want to give its enemies a tool with which to attack the national democratic movement. Along with that, the KMU has not been clear on its own conception of socialism.

It was this lack of political clarity, in my opinion, that led to the KMU's initial support of the Chinese government's suppression of the students and workers at Tienanmen Square in Beijing in June 1989. The process leading up to issuing the statement was flawed, as KMU chairperson Crispin Beltran related.⁴³ The statement was repudiated by the KMU upon development of internal dissension -- most publicly by the NFL -- and receipt of condemnations from the KMU's international supporters. But I believe that more fundamental than these considerations was the KMU's prior acceptance of the Chinese government's claim that it was socialist: because of this, any opposition to the government was seen by KMU leaders as an attack on socialism.

Observation of the KMU over the past six years, throughout the researching of my book and before, has left me convinced that the KMU's vision of a new society is based on mass democracy and empowerment of the oppressed. Quite frankly, it seems clear that the KMU would have not developed to the point that it has, much less continued to exist at all, without this direction. In my opinion, if workers did not believe this to be the case, they would have been unwilling to stand up to the level of repression that has been directed against them. And the allies which have joined with the KMU would have been unwilling to stand with the labor center.

In my experience, workers are unwilling to risk their lives to build a new society unless they think it will be qualitatively better than the one they now have, and they have seen that their leaders practice the equality, honesty, and simple living they preach. Workers have seen that from KMU leaders.

This suggests a way forward. First of all, KMU needs to develop a conception of the new society -- whether it is called socialism or something else -- that is anti-capitalist *and* based on mass democracy and empowerment of the oppressed. Included in the economic portion of this vision, in my opinion, must be answers to the following questions: 1) What must this society produce in order to assure its members an adequate standard of living and how can that be done with minimal environmental destruction?; 2) How is this production to be organized, will it be boss-on-top, worker-on-bottom as currently exists or will it be decentralized and egalitarian?; and 3) How

43. Interview with Crispin Beltran, May 2, 1990 in Manila.

can this production be most equitably distributed among the people?

Yet addressing economic concerns is obviously not enough. Issues of relations around politics, kinship and family, the environment and international relations, as well as relations between Christians, Muslims, and Tribal Filipinos all must be considered and addressed. However, to do all of this, which I deem essential, requires that the interests of workers and peasants, while important, be seen as no more or no less important than these other areas.

Along with this, it seems important that the KMU publicly presents its position vis-a-vis the CPP. There is unity in that both are ultimately anti-capitalist. That would seem to be of primary consideration. However, there also seem to be qualitative differences: not only does the KMU oppose changing the system by force of arms, but its conception of political power in the new society seems radically different. In my opinion, these differences can be *and need to be* propagated, discussed, and debated, and which can be done without attacking the CPP. In fact, it seems that the KMU can put out its differences with the CPP while opposing efforts to split the national democratic movement: the CPP is a legitimate member of the national democratic movement and further efforts to repress it or to split it from the national democratic movement must be opposed.

It seems that by directly developing its own ideology, and publicly discussing differences between the KMU and the CPP, the KMU would make another significant contribution to the national democratic struggle in the Philippines.

The Position of Women Within KMU

The KMU has been increasing its efforts to incorporate women into leadership positions. In a country where male chauvinism is so strongly engrained in the culture and society, despite a formal equality unique in Asia, a growing number of women are reaching positions of considerable responsibility. The elections of Lucena Flores as president and Beda Villanueva as secretary general of the United Workers of the Philippines are important steps forward, as are the elections of women as chairpersons of various alliances and KMU chapters around the country.

Despite this genuine progress, there are still two things which need to be said: (1) the increased sensitivity of KMU leaders to women's issues is due overwhelmingly to the efforts of women workers and particularly to those women in the KMK; and (2) KMU leaders, while not opposing women taking leadership positions, are not doing nearly enough to ensure the development of women leaders.

Part of this "blindness," in addition to the traditional sexism of the society, is that the society conceives the "worker" as male. It is the man who is the breadwinner, and the woman who takes care of the work at home; the

latter without pay, of course. This ignores the fact that most families in the Philippines cannot survive on just one income. In addition, younger women are increasingly refusing to be economically dependent on anyone; their emerging self-concept, especially for women in the cities, includes being an economically-contributing member of a household. Of course, single mothers have few choices but to work to support themselves and their families. The end result is that a worker is as likely to be female as male.

Yet a look at the KMU's basic education manual, *GTU: Course on Genuine Trade Unionism*, reveals that of the very few women represented in the illustrations as being "working class," each one is presented with several more men around her or in a domestic setting. Women are not presented as inherently economically-active people. And while this may be the KMU artist's own blind spot, the fact that this belief gets propagated in such a key document tends to indicate that the blind spot belongs to more people than just the artist.

Another place where this issue emerges as an organizational weakness is among the KMU's national council and its national executive council. Out of fifty-one members of the national council, fewer than ten are women; out of twenty-one national executive council members, there are four women. And these are the guiding organizational bodies. There is no way that this ratio adequately represents the number of women within the KMU or their contributions to the organization. And unfortunately, there does not seem to be enough recognition of the importance of addressing this imbalance.

On the one hand, these observations could be challenged on the basis that no labor movement in the world has done a qualitatively better job of incorporating women into leadership positions. And, as an American and former trade unionist, I would be totally unwilling to hold up the AFL-CIO as a shining example on this issue. On the other hand, an organization radically challenging the current structure and decision-making process of society needs to address this promptly and thoroughly.

One of the key methods KMU has used to develop political consciousness among its membership has been its education programs. However, there is nothing within the GTU book on the plight of women workers, or on women's contributions, or on the oppression of women in society. This is in contrast to a wide range of other issues presented, such as the movement for national democracy, genuine land reform and industrialization, international trade, and national, popular, and scientific education and culture. One important place to start incorporating women's issues and contributions is into the education courses, and particularly within the education documents: the PAMA, GTU, and the KPD courses need to include women's issues at the core of each course.

Along with this, women must be sought out for leadership development programs. Implementing assertiveness training programs in general, and public speaking and instructors' training specifically, is of vital importance. Fighting for a larger number of company-paid union positions in collective

bargaining agreements, to be filled with women as "apprentice" leaders, would enable more women to assume greater levels of responsibility through "on the job" training. And setting "affirmative action" quotas for women leaders that equal or exceed the proportion of women members in the particular organization would focus organizational attention on increasing women's leadership.

But it is not enough to support women's leadership in the union or labor organization. There is still the family relationship: most Filipinas get married in this very patriarchal society. Several issues must be confronted within the family. Women's work both inside and outside the house must be recognized as an important contribution to the well-being of the family and the society. Husbands must be taught that women's participation in union affairs - and any other efforts deemed important by the wives - is important and should not be limited or restricted. And, in addition to recognizing the importance of this participation, husbands must be taught to carry their share of housework and childcare responsibilities so that their wives can participate. One way to effectively raise and confront these issues, according to KMK organizer Ofelia Balleta, is in education sessions where both husband and wife participate.⁴⁴

In short, the promise conveyed to the nation's workers by the KMU must be specifically amended to include women workers. This has not been done, except through the KMK. This weakness is considerable and needs to be addressed as a priority.

Bureaucracy Within KMU

A unique situation currently exists in the KMU: occupying a leadership position is not seen as a goal for careerists. Leaders are very exposed and their lives are always in danger. These are not positions for the weak at heart.

However, what has happened is that once a leader attains a position, that leader usually maintains that position unless requested to fill another one, or he or she decides to give up that position due to family pressures or other considerations, or dies or is killed.

And along with that, many leaders fill two jobs, in what Filipinos call "double tasking." For example, in one case, the deputy secretary general of an alliance is also the regional representative of a federation. This is common.

And again, because of the security situation and the precarious financial

44. Interview with Ofelia Balleta, May 7, 1988 in Manila.

The South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union (SACCAWU), which is a member union of COSATU, just published an excellent book, *Sharing the Load: The Struggle for Gender Equality, Parental Rights and Childcare*, on this very subject. Not only is it an excellent attempt to seriously address these problems both within the larger society and within SACCAWU, but it is written and presented in a very accessible manner. Copies can be ordered from SACCAWU, P.O. Box 10730, Johannesburg 2000, South Africa, although no price is given.

position KMU organizations face, it is understandable that strong, capable leaders are retained in key positions and that they handle as much responsibility as they possibly can. It may be that the KMU cannot develop the leadership or the financial stability to do otherwise for the foreseeable future.

Nonetheless, down the road, when becoming a labor leader no longer means putting one's life on the line and when the organization can support sufficient personnel to cover all necessary positions of responsibility, the issue of bureaucratization will need to be confronted internally.

Bureaucratization of a labor organization results from two different sources. First of all, because of the oppressive and alienated nature of most work under capitalism, becoming a full-time labor leader is often seen as a desirable route out of the day-to-day grind. The work generally is much more interesting and the labor official has much more control over his or her day-to-day work than do most workers. In addition, leadership is seen as having more status, and within an organization such as the KMU, it certainly is seen as a "legitimate" thing to do.

The other source is internal: workers and other labor leaders desire to have the most qualified and dependable people in key positions. Generally speaking, once a person successfully fills a job, he or she continues in that position because he or she does it well. Or, another thing that happens is that when a person makes himself or herself seen as indispensable to a higher-up, he or she also stays in that position. Obviously, having a well-qualified person in a particular position is far preferable to having a "suck ass." Nonetheless, when the same people continue in office, others are prevented from having the chance to develop their own leadership capabilities; and this is especially true of women leaders.

There are several ways that the tendency toward bureaucratization can be combatted. The organization can establish limits on the length of term of office. It can also limit the amount of time that any leader can stay out of the workplace and still be an officer. And while specific procedures can be adopted so as not to deprive the organization of an extraordinary leader, controls need to be established so that these cases are seen as truly exceptional.

Another way to combat this problem relates to the importance of *reorganizing production in the new society: as workers redesign their work processes and gain power over them, they will feel less alienated from their work.* Less alienation reduces the pressures to escape and become labor bureaucrats.

Thirdly, leadership development programs should prepare workers to take on leadership responsibilities. Training people and then rotating them through various leadership positions give them a chance to develop their knowledge and skills, provide the organization with a large supply of trained leaders, and teach workers about the responsibilities and problems of leadership.

It would seem worthwhile for the KMU to lay the groundwork now for confronting this situation before it actually becomes a problem.

Summing Up

The men and women of the KMU have built a strong and powerful organization. This labor center is based on a philosophy of being genuine, militant, and nationalist, and from this philosophy, workers have developed the concept of genuine trade unionism. Coupled with this has been a democratic decision-making process, a structure of federations and alliances that is mutually reinforcing, an elaborate and emphasized education program, and alliances with other sectoral organizations.

The KMU has unified organizations at a number of different levels into a national labor center. And it has survived for over ten years, something no previous radical labor center has accomplished in the Philippines.

As a result, during its first ten years, the KMU led two nationwide general workers' strikes and constituted a major force in a nationwide *welgang bayan*, while continuing regional and provincial efforts. These national efforts have been a combination of KMU unions, unions from other labor groupings, and sectoral organizations.

It is clear that social movements, united in BAYAN, are a key force in the future development of the Philippines. And central to BAYAN is the KMU.

At the same time, the KMU has some problems it must address. It must get clear on its political ideology and its vision of the future, and it must differentiate its vision from that of the CPP. It must become much more sensitive and active in tackling women's oppression within the unions, the society, and the general culture. And it must confront the problem of bureaucracy within its ranks.

But in criticizing the KMU, the question must be asked if the labor center has developed an organizational process by which these problems can be addressed. It seems quite clear that it has, and I expect substantial progress to be made in regard to these issues in the upcoming period.

There are three important factors to come out of this case study. The most important is the different conception of working class organization and the transcending of the separation between economics and politics, both of which are integral to the KMU's conception of genuine trade unionism. There is no doubt that the KMU conceives itself as fighting for the well-being of all Filipino working people, and it has joined as an equal with other social movements to change society. This can be seen with its participation in a number of *welgang bayan* and its membership in the national alliance, BAYAN. But it also understands that it must fight domination of the country from outside, whether from particular nations, international institutions,

and/or reactionary foreign labor movements.

Another key factor is its autonomy from capital, state, and political parties. The KMU is controlled by its membership and not by any organization from the left or the right. The KMU is committed to union democracy, and the leadership is held accountable to the membership. The organization is decentralized as much as possible.

Another important factor is the importance placed on formally educating the rank and file through the PAMA, GTU, and KPD education courses. Most trade union education, when there is any, overwhelmingly focuses on elected leadership and in some unions, shop stewards. The KMU not only educates these key people but insists on educating the rank and file. In 1986, I was told by Serge Cherniguin, who at the time was the secretary general of the NFSW, that all 80,000 of its members had completed the one-day PAMA course. This is all the more impressive when one understands this was done under great repression, and that a large number of the sugar workers were basically illiterate.⁴⁵

It seems clear that the KMU is a new type of trade union, and that reflecting upon its examples and experiences can help develop the concept of genuine trade unionism.

Conclusion: Social Movement Unionism Provides a Way Forward

A number of points were made in this paper. I advanced the traditional conceptions of trade unionism, and then argued that the concept of social movement unionism is qualitatively different. I discussed the development of this concept, seeking out the most important parts of the conceptions put forth both by Peter Waterman and Rob Lambert. I suggested a new definition of social movement unionism which both surpasses the contributions of Waterman and Lambert and strengthens the conceptualization. This was joined with a case study of the KMU Labor Center of the Philippines, which provides evidence of the power of this new conception.

It seems clear that this concept of social movement unionism is a powerful one and can be applied at least to unionism as practiced by the KMU in the Philippines. Evidence suggests it also can be applied to unionism in Brazil, South Africa, and South Korea, and perhaps elsewhere.

But even if this is an accurate rendition of the labor movements

45. Although I place great importance on the education program of the KMU, and while I have seen some excellent materials produced in South Africa for COSATU unions, I do not know how systematic or central the educational process is in the social movement unions outside of the Philippines. Therefore, until we have additional research, I am not willing to apply it to my conception of social movement unionism. However, should education programs be systematically integrated in these other labor movements, and I strongly feel they should, I would definitely include its requirement in my conceptualization.

developing in these four countries, does it mean that it can develop in other countries? I do not see why it cannot, although obviously only time will suggest a more detailed answer to this question. However, among the four countries of Brazil, Philippines, South Africa, and South Korea, there is a wide range of social situations and cultures: these countries are at differing levels of industrialization, with different social histories, with different colonial histories, and with differing cultures and religions. They do share somewhat the commonality of increasing industrialization under the period of dictatorships – and that includes apartheid in South Africa, although dictatorship did not exist for the whites in that country. These wide variations do appear suggestive, but whether social movement unionism can develop in Islamic countries or in Sub-Saharan Africa, we will have to see, although my guess is that the answer to the question is more dependent on the particular development of the labor movements than any larger cultural or industrial issues.

Nonetheless, trade unionism based on this type has a chance to address some of the problems and issues facing workers in the LEDCs in particular and, I believe, in at least some of the MEDCs as well.⁴⁶ I do not see other types providing a way forward. So while the risk of repression is great, social movement unionism does offer a way forward against the subjugation and feelings of powerlessness common to workers throughout much of the "Third World."

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46. This might not be as pressing an issue in the social democracies of Northwestern Europe, or in Japan, but it certainly is appropriate in my opinion for the United States. However, the experience of Britain under Thatcher certainly warns that dependence on any "social pact" with a government can be violently overturned and in a relatively short period of time.

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