Workers Education Local 189 Collection

Papers, 1939-1977 (Predominantly, 1950-1977)

12 linear feet

Accession #954 OCLC #

The papers of Workers Education Local 189 were placed in the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs between 1979 and 1982 and were opened for research in March of 1984.

Workers Education Local 189 was chartered by the American Federation of Teachers on 1 November 1922 as the bargaining agent for the faculty members of Brookwood Labor College, which was one of several independent labor colleges that flourished during the 1920's and 1930's.

After Brookwood closed its doors in 1937, Local 189 opened its membership to all persons, regardless of their geographic location, who were engaged in workers' education and who could not function more effectively in any other unit of the American Federation of Teachers. It defined workers' education as education carried on by or with the full cooperation of, organized workers in order to increase their understanding and their effectiveness as union members. The original objectives of Local 189 were to bring workers' education personnel together for their mutual benefit, and to strengthen workers' education through collective bargaining and through protecting and advancing the technical and economic standards of its personnel.

Local 189 is governed by an elected executive board consisting of a president, vice-presidents, a secretary, a treasurer and regional board members. The executive board monitors the daily functioning of the organization, establishes policies, decides on membership applications and regulates the work of the local's committees. The board also has the power to set up chapters of Local 189 in cities or areas where there are sufficient members to warrant them. These chapters are responsible for reporting the existence of grievances and sub-standard conditions to the Board and may affiliate with city and centeral bodies and state federations. Also, Local 189 encourages and assists the development of bargaining chapters wherever two or more members are recognized by the employer for collective bargaining purposes.

Throughout its existence Local 189 has been active in distributing workers' education materials and films to the other members of the AFT, and to public schools, colleges and the community at large. Local 189 members have developed histories and bibliographies of workers' education and the labor movement and have conducted surveys of qualifications, duties and salaries of directors and teachers in workers' education. An

ongoing task of the organization was the publication of Labor Education News and Viewpoints, a journal which served as a medium for the exchange of ideas in labor education. The local has also served as a job clearinghouse in labor education.

In the 1960's and 1970's Local 189 members were vocal critics of the war in Vietnam and of President Nixon, were active in the civil rights movement and fought against what they felt were anti-democratic tendencies in the AFT. Many members of the local supported AFT President David Selden in his contest with Albert Shanker for control of the union. After Shanker won the presidency in 1974, the Executive Board of the AFT passed a resolution limiting locals to one geographic area. Local 189 would not abide by this jurisdictional resolution and disaffiliated from the AFT in early 1977.

The papers of Workers Education Local 189 reflect the activities of the organization in promoting workers' education, in developing standards for workers' educators and in supporting various progressive causes after the closing of Brookwood College. They also document the controversy which led to the local's disaffiliation from the AFT.

Important subjects in the collection:

Civil Rights
Federal Aid to Education
National Education Association
Ocean Hill-Brownsville Controversy
Political Action
Salaries for Workers' Educators
Selden vs. Shanker Controversy
University Labor Education Association
Vietnam War

Among the important correspondents are:

Anne Green Keith Knauss Orlie Pell Marvin Rogoff David Selden Albert Shanker Mark Starr Joan Suarez Owen Tapper Holgate Young

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Correspondence, minutes, financial reports, membership lists and newsletters documenting the daily functioning of Local 189 while it was in the AFT. This series includes information on civil rights and political actin, salaries and working conditions for workers' educators, the Ocean Hill-Brownsville controversy, the contest between David Selden and Albert Shanker for the AFT presidency and the disaffiliation of Local 189 from the AFT.

Series II, Workers Education Local 189, 1977, Box 24:

Correspondence, membership applications, dues forms and meeting minutes from the files of Local 189 after its disaffiliation from the AFT. Included in this series is information on the attempts at rebuilding Local 189.

Non-manuscript material:

Approximately 70 photographs relating to Local 189's annual meetings and AFT conventions and a number of posters, bumper stickers and buttons, mostly from Local 189's 50th Anniversary in 1972, have been placed in the Archives Audiovisual Collection.

Series I Workers Education Local 189, AFT, 1939-1977 Boxes 1-24

Correspondence, minutes, convention material, financial reports, membership applications and lists, and newsletters which document the daily functioning of Local 189 while it was affiliated with the AFT. This series includes information on civil rights and political action, Watergate, federal aid and funding for education, salaries and working conditions for workers' educators, the history of the labor movement and labor education, the Ocean Hill-Brownsville controversy, busing and community control of education, the contest between David Selden and Albert Shanker for the AFT presidency, and the disaffiliation of Local 189 from the AFT. The files are arranged alphabetically by subject or by type of material.

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Correspondence, membership applications, dues forms and meeting minutes from the files of Local 189 after its disaffiliation from the AFT. Included in this series is information on the attempts at rebuilding Local 189 and attempts by the local to attract new members in workers' education. The files are arranged alphabetically by type of material.

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