

South East Working-Class Task Force

2016 December/2017 January Newsletter

- South Side Quality of Life group unveils Education and Workforce Development Action Team plan

As the economy in Indiana and America continues to improve and the unemployment rate is at an all-time low since the 2008 recession, viable job training for a robust economy is still a priority.

A review of the Education and Workforce Development section of the South Side Quality of Life (SSQLP) and its “Talent in trades” concept aimed at promoting “family supporting careers” shows a much needed interest with workforce development. From the standpoint of the South East Working-Class Task Force (SEW-CTF) this concern is explained and refined nonetheless from the perspective of employers and the business community. See: <http://soindy.org/education-workforce-development/>

This situation calls for initiatives from neutral partners like the South East QLP (SEQLP) and the new SSQLP to rally/organize their low-income resident members to see what they want and can do regarding employment and job training, as well as job development.

Examples of employee perspectives on job training would be developing skills regarding: reading contracts; understanding company/corporate hierarchy, language, and decision-making processes; the stock market; negotiating issues around working conditions, wages, benefits, and other worker organizing abilities; and, appreciating work ethics for both employer and employees.

Another example would be preparing resident workers in our QLPs to create and own businesses. Fortunately, our southeast Indy had a world famous worker-owned business. See the SEW-CTF publication: “The Columbia Conserve Company: The story of a southeast Indianapolis worker owned and managed business” at <http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/The-Columbia-Conserve-Co.-A-southeast-Indianapolis-business-owned-and-managed-by-workers.pdf>

Our publication aims to educate the residents of the southeast side of Indianapolis about a substantially-sized business which was managed and owned by its workers, operating through a workers' council. The experiment in “industrial democracy” is inspirational, illustrating the possibilities of a future where businesses are owned, organized, and managed by southeast side workers. Operating from 1917 to 1953, the Columbia Conserve Company, located at Churchman Avenue and the Indianapolis Belt Railroad, provided Americans with a variety of soups, pork and beans, and tomato ketchup. Their business model was unprecedented in Indianapolis.

In summary, the challenge for the SSQLP/SEQLP and the SEW-CTF is to begin to engage all the residents in our areas. Indeed, the current involved membership of both QLPs do not reflect the economic diversity of the residents who live in their areas.

Let’s begin a conversation on education and workforce development which includes the perspectives of all demographic categories. For instance, according to the “By the numbers” 2016 SSQLP data sheet with facts from the 2010 census, out of a total population of 21,886 in the SSQLP area: 20% (1205) of families live in poverty and 1,019 have related children under age 18 living at home, 17.5% are households with incomes <\$25,000, and around 26% of the 21,886 are people of color.

These figures set a benchmark to gage the level of authentic and responsible involvement by the SSQLP working class in the own destiny.

- Income inequality: a hidden American reality

In a January 13 special edition of ABC’s 20/20 news show, viewers are connected with working-class Americans to appreciate the realities they face every day just to make ends meet.

<http://abcnews.go.com/US/deepdive/diane-sawyer-income-inequality-my-reality-hidden-america-44770807>

John Harris Loflin

Chair

South East Working-Class Task Force

john.loflin@seindy.org