

FOOD WORKERS SEE PROGRAM CENTRAL TO UNION ELECTIONS

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The Rank & File Committee for Reform of Local 196, Amalgamated Food Employees Union of the Amalgamated Meatcutters and Butcherworkmen, is fielding a slate in the coming union elections and is going all out to unseat the pro-company, anti-democratic and racist leadership of the local. The approach of the Committee to the elections offers lessons for other rank and file groups.

The key thing here is tying the slate to a class struggle program that points the way forward for the union, exposes the misleaders currently in control of the local, and educates the membership in the principles of rank and file unionism. By standing clearly for such a program, the Committee also makes it more difficult for

careerists to use the rank and file movement for their own selfish ends. All Committee candidates must not only endorse the program, but actively campaign for it and fight to implement it if elected. They will be judged accordingly by the membership.

The following program was adopted at the Committee's September meeting after full discussion and debate. Workers from Great Scot, Pathmark, and Shopping Cart markets, and from Blue Bird Food products came to the meeting and hammered out the program. The Organizer is reprinting the program in full in the hopes that other rank and file activists will find much in it which can be applied to struggles in other unions and industries.

Rank and File of Local 196 Election Platform

UNION DEMOCRACY

Without the strength of an educated and informed, active and involved membership, a union is just an empty shell. We want to build the active involvement of all members of Local 196. We want the members to be well informed and to participate in every level of union activities. A few union officials don't make up the union, WE DO. To build involvement and strengthen democracy, we stand for the following:

1. All shop stewards and district stewards should be elected for one year terms, with members having recall rights. Chief stewards should be elected by the other stewards. All business agents should be elected. There should be a two year term of office for union officials.
2. Salaries of union officials should be no more than the highest paid worker in the bargaining unit.
3. Union meetings should be held at least six times a year; members must have the right to add to the agenda.
4. A local union newspaper to keep members informed should be published at least six times a year. Members should be able to submit articles.
5. There should be a functioning union orientation program for all new members to inform them of their rights and responsibilities, on company time.
6. Written, detailed financial reports sent to the members at least twice a year.
7. No union expenses over \$300 unless approved by the membership (excluding regular operating costs) excepting in emergency situations. No expenses over \$100 unless approved by the executive board.
8. Elected representatives from all workplaces to be part of negotiating teams.
9. All additions, deletions or changes in contracts to be distributed in writing prior to ratification.
10. Executive Board meetings should be open to the membership to observe but not vote.
11. Union dues should be proportionate to a member's wages.
12. Reduced dues for all laid-off members.



HEALTH AND SAFETY

A fatter paycheck will do no one any good if they are too sick or too hurt to spend it. Our union must begin to fight for better safety conditions. Strong health and safety language must be negotiated into all future contracts. This is not the 1800's, it is 1976. There is no excuse for such conditions. For better health and real safety we stand for the following:

1. No workers should be exposed to any job that could cause illness or injury.
2. An elected health and safety committee in every workplace with the power to have repaired or shut down any hazardous job operation.
3. Preventive maintenance on all equipment -- kickplates and guards where necessary.



EQUALITY FOR ALL WORKERS

Unions are based on the belief that all workers are equal, both in the workplace and in the union. Lets put that belief into practice. We want all the rank and file members of Local 196 to unite to build a better union. We cannot afford to allow racism, sexism, or any form of discrimination keep us divided and fighting against each other. No one benefits except the companies. To fight against favoritism and discrimination by either the companies or the union, we stand for the following:

1. An end to all discrimination against Blacks, Puerto Ricans, other national minorities, and women in hiring, upgrading, promotions and apprenticeships.
2. The companies must provide on-the-job training so that all workers have the opportunity to move into more skilled or higher paid positions.
3. To avoid favoritism and discrimination, all job openings must be posted COMPANY-WIDE, to be bid on by any worker and awarded by strict seniority. The union must be notified of all job openings. No workers should be hired off the street until those presently employed have the opportunity to take the position.

4. All required or necessary protective equipment or clothing to be supplied and paid for by the company.
5. NO SPEED-UP. Production increases and/or cuts in the workforce should be negotiated. There should be a set ratio of meat wrappers to meat cutters.
6. All work areas to be clean, safe, and free from obstructions -- including bathrooms. Where possible, there should be separate bathroom facilities for workers and customers. A lunch room in all work areas.
7. Standard temperatures maintained in all work areas.
8. Any time required for medical attention as a result of job injury should not mean a loss of wages.
9. Polyvinyl chloride and the hot-wire wrapping method banned.
10. Fold-away stools for cashiers.

4. Contract language around seniority must be strengthened to prevent discriminatory treatment. The phrase "the employer shall consider seniority in conjunction with ability and practicability" must go.

5. Company-wide seniority lists posted in all workplaces.
6. The union should take all necessary action against those companies that refuse to hire national minorities or women.
7. Where appropriate, all union and company notices, contracts, health and welfare, and pension plans should be printed in Spanish or any other language when needed. Translators should be provided for all union meetings and contract negotiation sessions.
8. Maternity must be treated like any other disability -- loss of time benefits for up to 26 weeks. Maternity leave for up to one year with no loss of seniority.
9. One week paid paternity leave for fathers, because the pleasure and responsibility of having a child belongs to both parents.
10. Part-time workers must receive the same hourly pay as full-timers; benefits should be pro-rated; there must be a 20 hour minimum guarantee of hours.
11. Part-timers have the right to be shop stewards.
12. A part-timer must have the right to become full-time before additional part-timers are hired.
13. Childcare should be provided at all union meetings.