

GLOBAL ELECTRONICS

Issue No. 124

February, 1994

ORGANIZING DRIVE LAUNCHED IN SILICON VALLEY

Four AFL-CIO unions have just announced an imaginative, but challenging joint organizing drive targeting the working poor of Silicon Valley. Daily, thirty organizers, from varying ethnic backgrounds, are knocking on doors in carefully targeted neighborhoods in San Jose and Sunnyvale. They represent the Campaign for Justice, a newly created project of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, the Hotel Employees Restaurant Employees, and the Amalgamated Clothing the Textile Workers Union. The *San Jose Mercury News* (January 30, 1994) reports that the four unions have contributed staff members and pledged a combined \$2 million a year for the next three years.

The Campaign for Justice is building upon the recent successes of SEIU Local 1877, which successfully organized more than 1,500 janitors in the area over the last two years. The janitors have

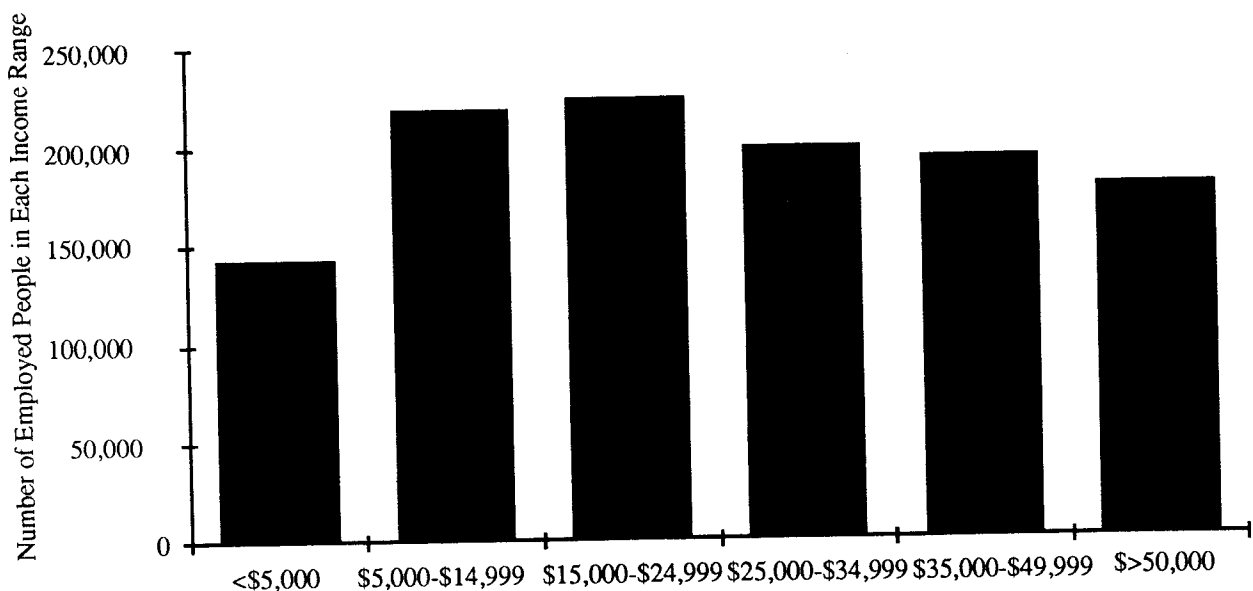
supplemented workplace organizing by building a solid base of support in the community, and they've learned to take their grievances with maintenance subcontractors to the high-profile client companies—such as Apple Computer, Hewlett-Packard, and Oracle System—where they clean.

The Campaign is focusing its efforts on low-income workers in manufacturing, laundry, food service, and landscaping. In January, the Campaign mobilized the employees of John J. Shooter, Inc., a landscaping firm based in Menlo Park. They appeared before the Palo Alto City Council, which contracts with Shooter, to complain of poor pay, illegal working conditions, and retaliation.

Since many of the Valley's low-income workers are immigrants who fear, or are at least not used to, challenging employers, the organizers will have to surmount enormous cultural obstacles.

(continued on page 3)

Silicon Valley: Earned Income Distribution, 1989



EARNED INCOME DISTRIBUTION IN SILICON VALLEY, 1989

	# People	<\$5K	\$5-15K	\$15-25K	\$25-35K	\$35-50K	\$>50K	<\$5K	\$5-15K	\$15-25K	\$25-35K	\$35-50K	\$>50K
White Men	409,900	33,640	45,980	49,880	62,220	93,560	124,620	8.2%	11.2%	12.2%	15.2%	22.8%	30.4%
Mexican Men	46,980	6,500	14,940	10,200	7,240	5,760	2,340	13.8%	31.8%	21.7%	15.4%	12.3%	5.0%
Other Hispanic Men	12,000	1,240	2,420	2,360	1,920	2,340	1,720	10.3%	20.2%	19.7%	16.0%	19.5%	14.3%
African-American Men	21,960	2,880	3,500	4,640	4,340	4,280	2,320	13.1%	15.9%	21.1%	19.8%	19.5%	10.6%
Chinese/Taiwanese Men	28,060	2,960	3,160	3,440	4,140	5,900	8,460	10.5%	11.3%	12.3%	14.8%	21.0%	30.1%
Filipino Men	26,280	2,500	5,220	7,140	5,940	3,680	1,800	9.5%	19.9%	27.2%	22.6%	14.0%	6.8%
Japanese Men	10,220	580	1,060	1,060	1,820	2,180	3,520	5.7%	10.4%	17.8%	21.3%	34.4%	28.6%
Indian (Asian) Men	10,200	720	1,380	1,980	1,240	1,960	2,920	7.1%	13.5%	19.4%	12.2%	19.2%	28.6%
Korean Men	4,100	440	780	660	820	720	680	10.7%	19.0%	16.1%	20.0%	17.6%	16.6%
Vietnamese Men	15,320	2,420	3,060	3,540	2,600	2,760	940	15.8%	20.0%	23.1%	17.0%	18.0%	6.1%
Other Asian Men	3,480	420	700	800	520	520	520	12.1%	20.1%	23.0%	14.9%	14.9%	14.9%
Other Men	56,100	6,700	15,880	13,260	9,660	7,660	2,940	11.9%	28.3%	23.6%	17.2%	13.7%	5.2%
White Women	332,180	51,220	71,260	77,080	66,160	45,080	21,380	15.4%	21.5%	23.2%	19.9%	13.6%	6.4%
Mexican Women	30,580	6,460	10,540	7,520	4,260	1,360	440	21.1%	34.5%	24.6%	13.9%	4.4%	1.4%
Other Hispanic Women	11,620	2,000	3,320	3,060	1,980	1,060	200	17.2%	28.6%	26.3%	17.0%	9.1%	1.7%
African-American Women	18,740	2,820	3,760	5,420	4,140	1,980	620	15.0%	20.1%	28.9%	22.1%	10.6%	3.3%
Chinese/Taiwanese Women	20,800	3,240	4,040	4,300	3,540	3,960	1,720	15.6%	19.4%	20.7%	17.0%	19.0%	8.3%
Filipina Women	27,140	3,120	6,460	8,420	5,800	2,480	860	11.5%	23.8%	31.0%	21.4%	9.1%	3.2%
Japanese Women	9,820	1,240	2,040	2,080	2,380	1,640	440	12.6%	20.8%	21.2%	24.2%	16.7%	4.5%
Indian (Asian) Women	5,500	920	1,760	1,320	720	560	220	16.7%	32.0%	24.0%	13.1%	10.2%	4.0%
Korean Women	4,260	740	1,220	1,180	520	460	140	17.4%	28.6%	27.7%	12.2%	10.8%	3.3%
Vietnamese Women	9,980	1,620	2,600	3,300	1,560	740	160	16.2%	26.1%	33.1%	15.6%	7.4%	1.6%
Other Asian Women	2,540	340	980	580	320	220	100	13.4%	38.6%	22.8%	12.6%	8.7%	3.9%
Other Women	40,400	8,000	12,940	11,180	5,220	2,460	600	19.8%	32.0%	27.7%	12.9%	6.1%	1.5%
TOTAL	1,158,160	142,720	219,000	224,400	199,060	193,320	179,660	12.3%	18.9%	19.4%	17.2%	16.7%	15.5%

For this reason it has hired organizers fluent, not only in Spanish, but in commonly spoken Asian languages.

For more information, contact the Campaign for Justice, 430 S. Fourth St., San Jose, CA, 95112. (Phone: 408/494-0855)

THE VALLEY'S LOW INCOMES

Silicon Valley is correctly recognized as one of the country's wealthier areas. The median *household* income in Santa Clara County is higher than any other California metropolitan area. In fact, it ranks seventh in the nation, with an average annual family income approaching \$54,000.

By definition, high-tech industry employs a disproportionately large number of well paid professionals such as engineers and computer scientists. Silicon Valley, where labs and headquarters are located, hosts even a greater share of professionals. The low end of the workforce is proportionately smaller than elsewhere, but it remains large.

Analysis of 1990 U.S. Census data shows that 31% of the Valley workforce, nearly 362,000 people, had annual earned incomes under \$15,000. It is difficult for households with two such incomes to survive in the Valley. And in a real estate market still buoyed by the influx of highly paid engineers, scientists, and managers, it would take several such incomes to buy a house.

Household income levels overstate the local standard of living because it takes a high income even to pay rent here. With average rents nearly \$800 a month in 1990, a household earning \$30,000 annually before taxes—that is, two of the \$15,000 income earners—would have to devote a third of its gross income just for shelter. In practice, the working poor pool their incomes so they can stay in the Valley.

The income distribution data also illustrates the Valley's income differentials by gender and national origin, as presented in another form in *Global Electronics* No. 121. For example, only 19.4% of the white men in the Valley earned less than \$15,000 in 1989, while 55.6% of the Mexican women and 45.3% of Filipina women, for example, reported earnings at that level.

Notes: In this study, we averaged the annual earned income of individual workers, not family or household income. Differences, therefore, could be due to three factors: 1) different pay rates (wage or salary); 2) varying lengths of workweek (hours), and 3) duration of employment during the year. earned income reports by individuals. It does not include welfare and other transfer payments, nor does it include

investment income.

Our analysis does not determine whether pay differentials are due to varying educational backgrounds, differing skill levels, discriminatory employment practices, or other factors. The census does not ask whether workers chose part-time work or voluntarily worked only a portion of the year, so we cannot determine whether any group's low income was by choice.

The area covered is somewhat larger than Santa Clara County. It includes southern Alameda and San Mateo Counties as well as commuters into Santa Clara County.

N.I.I.: A HOUSEHOLD WORD?

In a debate that only seems to include Vice-President Gore and giant telecommunications and computer companies, the U.S. seems ready to build a new National Information Infrastructure (NII). From the press coverage, it appears to be a question of who will make the most money producing hardware, renting cable of various sorts, and delivering entertainment to the masses.

To those people who take full advantage of the nation's current information infrastructure—primarily the Internet network of computer networks—the NII represents a promise much greater than the cable and telephone companies are offering. One group that grows from this community is Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility, which last October issued an excellent report, "Serving the Community: A Public Interest Vision of the National Information Infrastructure." (For more information, write CPSR at Box 717, Palo Alto, CA, 94302 or phone 415/322-3778.)

On page 4 we reprint a brief, yet pointed statement by another such group, the USACM, the Public Policy Committee of ACM.

GLOBAL ELECTRONICS

edited by Lenny Siegel

Issue No. 124

published by the Pacific Studies Center
222B View Street

Mountain View, CA 94041—USA

Phone: 415/969-1545—Fax: 415/968-1126

US ISSN 0739-0416

subscription rates (12 issues)

United States: \$12.00

Canada and Mexico: US\$14.00

Overseas: US\$18.00

all back issues are available

Copyright ©, February, 1994—Mountain View, CA