

BUILDING NETWORKS AND COALITIONS



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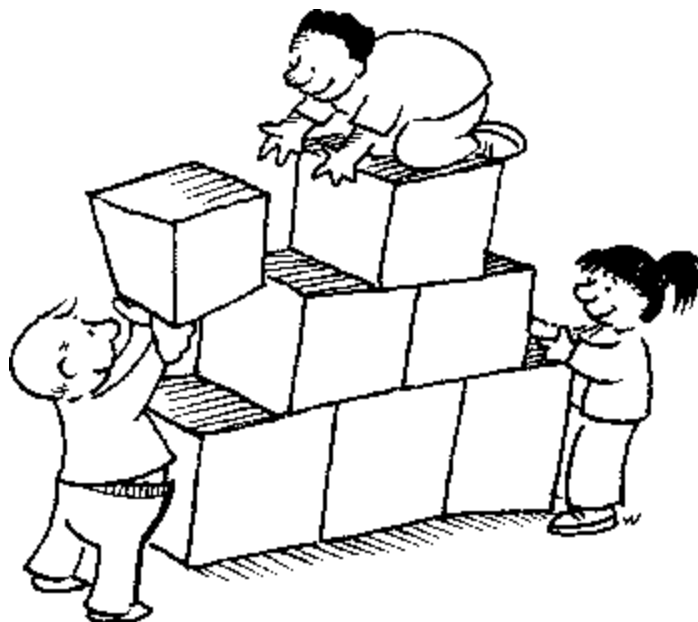
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To win the positive changes we need in our workplaces, our communities, our economies and in society; and to defeat legislative, public policy and other changes that will hurt working families in the United States, Canada and countries around the world; we need to build strong, diverse and effective coalitions of individuals and organizations to move these fights forward.

This piece on “Building Campaigns, Coalitions and Networks” is filled with tips and ideas about how to do just that. It will cover:

- ▶ Building Networks
- ▶ Getting Started on a Campaign, Action or Event Checklist
- ▶ Organizing Skills: The Basic Ingredients
- ▶ Launching the Community Campaign

When building campaigns around particular issues, it is important to keep in mind that organizations that you seek to involve in the campaign may have their own priority issues that they are working on as well. Building community campaigns often involves understanding and respecting other organizations’ issues and priorities, and finding ways to collaborate on those issues and campaigns that will mutually benefit all organizations involved.



HOW TO BUILD A NETWORK

Networking means getting to know people in your plant/office and different organizations so that you have a network of people who will help you with the activity or event.

It is one of the most important activities of any campaign. It not only helps your campaign reach its objectives; it also gets your union known to more people in the community.

Here are some basic principles of networking:

- ✓ **Make a list of groups that may support the campaign and/or event(s).**

Divide your list into two categories: Groups that will almost certainly support you and groups that would probably support you.

- ✓ **Go to your strength list**

Concentrate right away on groups which will definitely support you activity or event. Other unions, politicians the union has supported, women, environmental and service groups, church, teacher, farm and seniors' organizations (i.e. SOAR) should be lined up before approaching groups which might not have positions on the issue. The more support you have, the more support you get. Put the sisters and brothers in your own local union at the top of your list.

- ✓ **Ask around**

Your campaign activists probably belong to other organizations. Ask them to arrange a meeting with these other groups to discuss the campaign. Ask all sympathetic supporters for suggestions on who else should be approached. Everyone should be a recruiter. A good motto: "Each one reach one."

- ✓ **Ask for a chance to speak**

Ask for time at an organization's meeting to briefly explain your issues and event. Come with literature and be as non-partisan as possible. If asked what kind of support you

want; be prepared to tell the groups exactly what you want.

- ✓ **Decide in advance** just what is realistic in the way of support for each group or person. Asking for more than is possible for the group to give, whether in activity or contributions, will turn them off.

- ✓ **Respect each group's decision-making process.**

Don't make any suggestions on how they should decide their position or support. If you encounter opposition at someone else's meeting, be polite. Best response: "I respect your point of view and your decision-making process. I appreciate being invited here to explain our campaign, but I am happy to listen to any other position. That's what democracy is all about."

- ✓ **Politeness pays**

If invited to speak at another organization's meeting, always follow up with a brief thank you letter, whether or not you were able to get their support.

Avoid getting involved in any way in the internal politics of another union or group. You will only damage your own case.

- ✓ **Ask for an answer as soon as possible.**

Most groups will probably decide whether to support the campaign after you have left the meeting. Make sure they know where to reach you. Ask them for an answer as soon as possible, whatever way they decide.

- ✓ **Stay in touch**

If you win support from any group, don't take it for granted. Name a person to stay in touch with and inform the group regularly. Key contacts in each supporting organization should be informed in advance of any events.

- ✓ **Advertise your allies**

Recognize groups that lend support of any

kind. Be generous in your praise of them. Mentioning the names of supporting groups and high-profile individuals will give the campaign more credibility.

What should be the task of this committee? Let them decide that.

- ✓ **Form a coalition committee**
If there is enough solid support in your community, consider forming a committee of leaders of supporting organizations.
- ✓ **Don't burn bridges**
Never badmouth an opponent or non-supporter in your own community. You may, without thinking, offend a friend or relative who does support you. You will have lost forever an opportunity to change his or her mind. Remember that in future events they may share your support of an issue and be most active and visible components.
- ✓ **After the event or action**
Do some maintenance work on your network. Call and express your appreciation for any help and support. Keep a list of names and phone numbers. The next campaign may be sooner than you think.
- ✓ **Evaluate**
Review your work and list the results, both good and bad.



GETTING STARTED ON A CAMPAIGN, ACTION, OR EVENT CHECKLIST

- ▶ Define the issues
- ▶ Get the facts
- ▶ Ask how your local area will be affected
- ▶ Know the objective
- ▶ Recruit key people
- ▶ Work out a plan
- ▶ Ensure that objective and plan coincide with those of the central campaign
- ▶ Divide up the responsibilities

Key areas of responsibilities

(Spread the duties to everyone – it can be a learning & self-confidence builder)

- ▶ Overall coordinator
- ▶ Public support coordinator
- ▶ Lobbying coordinator
- ▶ Telephone network coordinator
- ▶ Media spokesperson
- ▶ Political liaison
- ▶ Timetable development
- ▶ Union/Community-membership communications
- ▶ On-the-job canvass
- ▶ Telephone canvass

Possible campaign or event materials

- ▶ Leaflets
- ▶ Fact sheets
- ▶ Background information (press clippings, etc.)
- ▶ Posters
- ▶ Flyers
- ▶ Buttons
- ▶ Petition forms
- ▶ Letterhead
- ▶ Briefs and policies

Networking

- ▶ Contact all potential supporting groups personally
- ▶ Follow up with a phone call, letter and event material(s)

- ▶ Concentrate first on natural allies – approach affected groups
- ▶ Recruit friendly politicians, clergy, respected union leaders, other women's committees in the region
- ▶ Speak at meetings of other groups
- ▶ Ask campaign or event workers for networking possibilities
- ▶ Keep records of all contacts, name, title, address, telephone numbers
- ▶ Computerize your records, if possible

The activity or event launch

- ▶ Set dates that do not conflict with other important community and union events
- ▶ Chart a time-line for the activity or event
- ▶ Choose a location that is known
- ▶ Arrange for speakers
- ▶ Promote attendance among allies
- ▶ Publicize as much as possible
- ▶ Invite the media
- ▶ Have materials ready
- ▶ Have a plan for recruiting volunteers and fundraising
- ▶ Ensure the sound system is adequate
- ▶ Keep the speeches short
- ▶ Allow time for questions and comments
- ▶ Record the names, addresses and telephone numbers of all participants to build contact lists

Lobbying

- ▶ List all politicians you can reach who may affect decision
- ▶ Prepare a list of standard questions to ask
- ▶ Make appointments
- ▶ Go in small groups
- ▶ Take background material
- ▶ Show how the issue affects your area
- ▶ Give the issue a human face
- ▶ Ask for a commitment
- ▶ Follow-up with a letter
- ▶ Send another delegation. Don't take no for an answer!
- ▶ Make detailed notes of the politicians' responses

Media

- ▶ Contact all media personnel who could be reporting on the activity or event
- ▶ Spend time with them, if possible. Give them background information
- ▶ Keep media informed of events
- ▶ Issues short press releases when appropriate
- ▶ Always stick to one point
- ▶ Be prepared for interviews anytime you contact media
- ▶ Try radio and TV talk shows and cable TV for publicity



A news conference

- ▶ Hold in mid-to-late morning
- ▶ Notify the media the day before (sooner for weekly publications)
- ▶ Arrange room properly
- ▶ Wear appropriate clothing
- ▶ Distribute materials and statement
- ▶ Read well-prepared and rehearsed statement
- ▶ Control who answers questions – Always be honest with answers

ORGANIZING SKILLS THE BASIC INGREDIENTS

Here's what you need to organize successfully:

1. An issue

You must first make sure the issue has been identified and is clear to everyone. The issue may be local, regional, provincial, national, or international.

2. Objectives

The goals of the campaign or event should be defined by your local coalition, community

group or labor organization. As a local organizer, it is your job to:

- ▶ Study the objectives. See how you can help reach them in your own community.
- ▶ Get union members/community involved in the campaign
- ▶ Find out if there are other groups in your community that can help
- ▶ Make sure elected political officials are always aware of your concerns
- ▶ Try to get publicity for the campaign

3. People

If we want to reach our objectives, we need people to help. Here is how to find them:

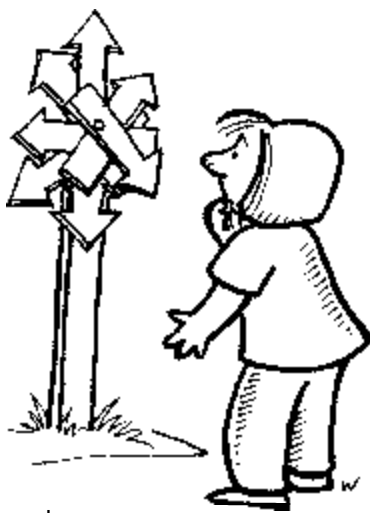
- ▶ First have your women's committee or council members on board and supporting others.
- ▶ Talk to your local union leadership, and then go to members of unions and/or community groups.
- ▶ Then, start explaining your position to others – friends, neighbors and family members. Don't force your opinions on people.
- ▶ Try not to ask the same activists to do everything. Try to spread the work as widely as possible.

4. Plan

Planning will be discussed in detail further on.

5. Community awareness

- ▶ The committee should appoint a publicity coordinator or committee
- ▶ List all the printed materials you will need
- ▶ Make a list of events that would attract attention
- ▶ Make media contacts



- ▶ Appoint a committee to inform politicians and major union and community leaders
- ▶ Contact other potential allies

DEFINING THE ISSUE

To get people interested and excited about an issue, they have to know how it affects them personally. To help them in this, you should analyze how it will affect people in your city or town. Here are some questions you should ask about the campaign or event issue:

- ▶ What is being proposed? (a new law, service cutbacks, a plant closing, etc.) Or what is happening now? (an existing bad law, a community health hazard, unresponsive governments, etc.)
- ▶ Will there be a loss of jobs? If there is, where will it take place? How will the loss of jobs or services affect the local economy?
- ▶ Will money be taken out of the local economy? If people are hit by cutbacks, for example, they won't be able to spend as much. What are the human consequences? How will that affect the local economy and workers in other services or industries in your community?
- ▶ What are the economic and social consequences? You will usually find that a single issue is both economic and social. For example, if a plant closes and moves to Mexico, the immediate effect will be economic. This will lead to the social programs linked to unemployment and lower standards of living.
- ▶ Who will benefit from the proposed change? Who benefits now from an existing undesirable situation? This is important information and is not always obvious. For example, when countries do not offer or enforce child labor, human rights or environmental protections or enforce meaningful minimum wage laws, U.S. or Canadian based companies look to move operations from the U.S. or Canada to those countries in order to cut their costs and reap higher profits. It is often women and children from those countries who are most exploited by low wages and poor health, safety and environmental conditions. In the U.S. and

Canada, as companies lay off workers and close their U.S. or Canadian facilities, unemployment rises, there are increased demands for more social services at the same time the corporate tax base for providing those services is declining, and there is a general decline in our overall standard of living. Think about this carefully.

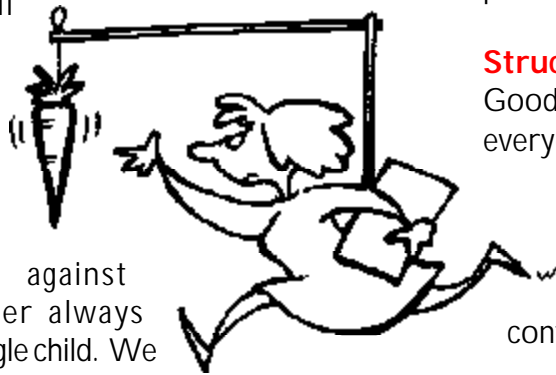
SETTING OBJECTIVES

It is important that you set realistic objectives. Here is how you can do that.

- ▶ Make sure you can achieve your objectives.

Nobody will volunteer for something that cannot be done.

That is why campaigns against world hunger always focus on a single child. We can all feed one child. It is a realistic objective.



- ▶ Ask how you can solve your problem. When you have a grievance under your collective agreement, you ask for a remedy. That is your objective. You never ask for more than you are entitled to. That's unrealistic. A community campaign is like the grievance procedure. In this case, a "social contract" has been or will be violated in some way. The remedy sought is an end to the violation and/or compensation for the victims. It could be as simple as asking citizens to sign a petition or card of support or more tangible like donating supplies to a women's shelter.

RECRUITING PEOPLE – WHY DO PEOPLE VOLUNTEER?

Why do people give their time and energy to a cause? In approximate order of importance, the main reasons are because they:

- ✓ Feel personally affected by the issue
- ✓ Were asked to get involved by a friend or person they respect
- ✓ Feel compassion for others who are affected
- ✓ Need to feel part of the group with whom they identify
- ✓ Are attracted by the leadership
- ✓ Dislike the opposition
- ✓ Are looking for status or recognition
- ✓ Feel guilty about being apathetic

Keep these reasons in mind when you ask others to get involved in the committee or event. If one pitch does not work, try another.

Structure

Good organizing means dividing the work so everyone has a job. Everyone can share the load.

Many jobs will overlap. The idea is for everyone involved pitching in together. But we do need some structure to prevent confusion.

Here is a list of the jobs, which can be divided among the people:

Campaign coordinator

- ▶ Main spokesperson.
- ▶ Responsible for overall direction.
- ▶ Stays in touch with other key people.
- ▶ Calls and conducts meetings to keep everyone up to date.
- ▶ Makes sure information gets out.
- ▶ The major contact with the national or provincial campaign coordinator.

Membership communications coordinator

- ▶ Get people interested in the campaign.
- ▶ Educators and recruits from local community groups and union ranks.

Coalition coordinator

- ▶ Keeps in touch with other groups who would be interested in the campaign.
- ▶ Sends out information and asks for help.

- ▶ Works with other sympathetic groups to make sure everyone is moving towards the same goal.
- ▶ Helps organize coalitions with unions and supporters.

Information coordinator

- ▶ Writes and is responsible for printing and distribution of leaflets, fact sheets, news releases, petitions, etc. Helps the campaign coordinator with the media work. Distributes information given to the local committee by the national or provincial campaign.

Telephone canvasser

- ▶ A good job for someone who wants to help but needs to stay close to home.
- ▶ Stays in touch with campaign workers, calls potential volunteers.

Government contact person

- ▶ Keeps in touch with local, state, and federal officials. Make sure elected officials are aware of our concerns.

Petition coordinator

- ▶ Sets up petition locations or canvass efforts.
- ▶ Gets space at shopping malls, etc.
- ▶ Finds volunteers to get signatures.

CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

A national campaign or event will have a strategy for the entire country. A local campaign or event should have its own strategy of how best to make the national plan work.



Here is an outline of the things you will need to consider:

- ▶ How to get union members involved in the campaign.
- ▶ How to find allies in the community. As local organizer, one of your most important jobs will be to spread the message out.
- ▶ Distribution of materials. The central campaign will likely have produced many leaflets, fact sheets, etc. One of the important jobs of the local committees is to make sure these items get into the hands of people who will read them.
- ▶ Organize events. An attention-getting event will get lots of publicity and give you the chance to meet new supporters.
- ▶ Planning a media strategy: drawing up a list of contacts, appointing a media coordinator.
- ▶ Identify revenue sources for your budget.

Getting the word out

There are several things you can do to raise public awareness:

- ▶ Announce those institutions or organizations that are in support.
- ▶ Contact other unions through their delegates to the local Central Labor Council.
- ▶ Ask local unions in your area to endorse the campaign in executive and general membership meetings.
- ▶ Approach service clubs and volunteer organizations.
- ▶ These groups have people who are like-minded and experienced in running events. Ask for support and endorsement. Ask for a chance to speak at a meeting.
- ▶ Contact local businesses that may have an interest in the campaign. Do not expect much support at first. Be friendly: The next time you approach them, the reception is likely to be better.
- ▶ If you have literature, distribute it through the union and community events.
- ▶ Contact church, women's pensioners' (i.e. SOAR) and other groups.

Schedules and the campaign or event

Here are some things to consider when scheduling a campaign or event:

- ▶ Never have a meeting without a specific purpose. For example, a public forum should be followed soon by another event to give the campaign momentum.
- ▶ Campaign events must not be on the same day as other major community or union events.
- ▶ Make sure campaign events happen just before municipal council meetings. Your council should be involved in every issue, even a provincial or national one.
- ▶ Be realistic in what you can expect from volunteers. Don't plan more than can be delivered.
- ▶ Make sure your activities fit the national or regional campaign timetable if there is one. There will be certain times when the central campaign will want to schedule events. Your planning should always take this into account.
- ▶ Make sure you are prepared for any event. A poorly planned event will often do more harm than good. Leave plenty of time to prepare every stage of the event.
- ▶ Make sure you have broad base support by the time you start lobbying or holding public events.
- ▶ Don't try to do too much at once. Not thinking carefully about the schedule of the campaign can lead to these common problems:

- ✗ Members don't participate
- ✗ The public forgets about the issue
- ✗ The media are not interested
- ✗ Activists get frustrated
- ✗ Politicians don't feel any pressure

Targeting the decision-makers

Remember that the issue is a matter on which there is disagreement or to which you want to raise awareness and support. Therefore, a campaign has three objectives:

1. Persuade people who agree with you to say so in public.
2. Change the opinions of those who disagree with you.

3. Win over those who are undecided about the issue.

But not all opinions are equally important. We want to persuade people who are in a position to help our case. We need to reach the decision-makers and those who most influence them. Your campaign strategy should target your community's opinion leaders so that the message overlaps.



You should also go after politicians who do not have to make a decision (vote) on the issue. It is easy for them to take popular positions if they know they won't have to pay a political price later on. Try to get people to take a specific action on the issue.

Most importantly, you must lobby those politicians whose decisions matter most.

LAUNCHING THE COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN

Few people in your community will be interested in a campaign that does not seem relevant to them. This is the danger with national/statewide campaigns. The issue can seem too big or too distant to get people interested.

Take great care to promote your campaign in terms that will make it seem close to home. For example, a flyer announcing a public meeting to oppose an action of the government will be met with indifference unless it specifies how your community can do something real to affect politicians.

Bring a union officer to town

Politicians and district and international representatives of major unions are public figures.

Because they have been elected or appointed to represent so many people, their presence in a community is news, especially during campaigns.

When you begin planning a campaign, call your district director or district women's coordinator. Have him or her arrange the best possible date for a union officer to visit your community. This will give your campaign a higher public profile.

Working with your district, you may be able to plan an entire day around the visit. There will be several opportunities to give your campaign more exposure.

Here are some suggested events you can arrange ahead of time:

- ▶ A morning news conference which includes campaign leaders from the union and supporting groups.
- ▶ A public tour of a location which is significant to the campaign.
- ▶ An "in depth" interview with the local newspaper.
- ▶ A meeting with the heads of supporting groups to discuss campaign progress and strategy.
- ▶ A meeting with local political figures, such as the Mayor and other elected politicians.
- ▶ An evening public campaign meeting at which the officer is the featured speaker.
- ▶ Appearances on radio/TV open line shows.

All of this needs a lot of advance planning. The key to success is confirming events as soon as possible. This allows you to spend more time publicizing the events to ensure better attendance.

ORGANIZING A PUBLIC EVENT

A local meeting (call it a public forum or debate), widely publicized and well attended, is the best way

to kick-off a campaign. Remember that follow-up activities and events should be planned in advance, to let people know that they can be part of something that will have some life. The kick-off meeting should be for the general public, not just for people in our own organizations.

Don't be conservative in advertising this event. The number of people will usually measure its success in attendance.

It is extremely important that this initial event be well planned and well promoted. If it falls flat, it will be difficult to rebuild momentum and be taken seriously.

Here are some guidelines for organizing a public meeting:

Location

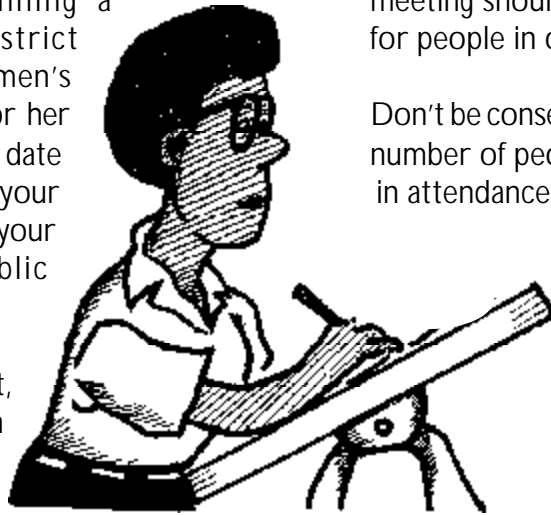
Ever tried to find an out-of-the-way meeting hall while driving around in the dark? Don't do that to other people. Make sure the location is convenient, well-known with easy access and plenty of parking.

What size should the hall be? Many organizations say it is best to get a hall, which is slightly smaller than the one you estimated you would need. That way, it will look crowded with interested people.

- ▶ Have an adequate sound system and test it before the meeting.
- ▶ Have a podium at or next to your head table
- ▶ Don't put the chairs too close together. It makes people uncomfortable and actually inhibits discussion.
- ▶ Don't forget a table for your literature.
- ▶ Reserve some places for local media.
- ▶ Have some kind of refreshments, if only coffee and teas. People appreciate it.
- ▶ Make sure everyone signs in. Get their names, addresses, organizational affiliations, etc., to help build a contact list.

Speaker(s)

Here is a brief guide on how to pick speakers for



your event:

- ▶ Call your District Director or Women's District Coordinator.
- ▶ Invite a high-profile person from the community who is concerned about the issue.
- ▶ Ask your main speaker to be sure to refer to examples within the local community.
- ▶ Ask him or her to be brief too.
- ▶ Representatives from supporting groups should each be given a brief chance to present their views.
- ▶ The meeting should have a chairperson who introduces each speaker.
- ▶ People come to meetings to listen, but they also like to be heard. Leave plenty of time for questions and comments.
- ▶ Do not let a meeting drag on. Two hours is pushing it.

Media attention

- ▶ Contact all media, including weeklies and local union publications once arrangements for the meeting are finalized.
- ▶ Issue a preliminary news release two weeks before the event, outlining topics to be discussed.
- ▶ Two-to-five days before the meeting, issue another release with details on the agenda.
- ▶ Place an announcement on cable television, if possible.
- ▶ If the budget allows, announce the meeting on the local radio station. If the newspaper lists community events (most do), make sure yours is mentioned.

Filling the hall

- ▶ Announce the meeting at the labor council and ask unions to promote it among their members. Give them small flyers to post.
- ▶ Personally contact the leadership of supporting groups. Ask them to show support by coming to the meeting and by telling their members about it.
- ▶ Invite elected officials in the area. Give them a chance to speak. If you have time, send a letter of invitation to the heads of all key groups, to

all elected politicians and to all local unions.

- ▶ Follow up the letter with a phone call. Ask for a commitment of attendance.
- ▶ Remind key figures who have said they will attend one or two days before the meeting.

Other considerations for kick-off meetings

- ▶ Try to arrange for the event to be videotaped. Your local cable company might be able to help.
- ▶ Set up a literature table at the event.
- ▶ Send a letter of thanks to the speakers the very next day.
- ▶ If a public petition is planned, start it before the meeting is over.
- ▶ Well before the meeting is over, be sure to recognize all organizations and people who are supporting the campaign
- ▶ Plan to take those who helped organize the meeting out for a late-night snack or drink afterwards.
- ▶ Get working on the next event right away. If the meeting was a success, you have momentum. If it wasn't, you have ground to cover.

Keeping our issue in front of the public

Here are some easy ways to make sure your issue stays in the news:

- ▶ Get to know journalists who will be covering topics like yours. Try calling the reporter for your community's newspapers to discuss things in general over a cup of coffee.
- ▶ Give the reporter some background on your organization and your interest in the campaign. He or she will have some questions that will give you an idea of what they are interested in.
- ▶ Keep them updated.
- ▶ During the campaign, send out regular newsletters or updates. Invest the time to call the reporters when there is something that may interest them.
- ▶ Put together an information package on your campaign. Clippings from other newspapers, fact sheets, literature, etc., all make it easier to

write a story. If you make a reporter's job easier, they will be more likely to cover your stories.

The spokesperson

When you go into negotiations, one person speaks for the team. So when you deal with the media, make sure you follow the same principle. Few things are more embarrassing to a campaign than to have two spokespeople saying different things.

The campaign coordinator will probably be the best spokesperson, but not necessarily. A person who thoroughly understands the issue and is well spoken is the one to deal with the media. Designate this person as the media coordinator.

That person, and only that person should make statements on policy, unless he or she refers the journalists to others.

The job of the spokesperson is to represent the campaign, not sound off on his or her personal opinions.

The media coordinator

The media coordinator should control the flow of information and campaign statements to the media. This does not mean they should always be the only spokesperson. If there is someone else who is more qualified to speak on a particular issue, the coordinator should refer that person to the reporter.

For example, if your issue concerns a plant closing, the fate of a single parent who works there will likely attract media attention. If she is willing (and prepared), take her to meet a reporter covering the campaign.

Be honest and open

The vast majority of journalists are honest folks. They will try to give you a fair shake in their stories. You should do the same for them.

Whatever else you do, always tell the truth. It is perfectly all right to say you don't know the answer to a question.

