

Report to AFSC on the 2005 OCCLAD Survey

Executive Summary

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Reason and Rationale for Survey

The survey of virtual members of the Ohio Committee on Corporations, Law, and Democracy (OCCLAD) was conducted to ascertain *who* members of the OCCLAD listserv were, *what* they thought and did regarding the issues of corporations and democracy, and *if* they would like to see OCCLAD change or evolve in the future.

Because the OCCLAD list is a virtual list, not an actual organization with members who regularly meet face-to-face, it is difficult to appreciate who the actual people are who subscribed to this list. We intended that a survey would allow one of the key organizers of the list, AFSC director Greg Coleridge, to get a clearer picture of who these people, what their interests are, and how best to address their interests, concerns, and issues. With this information, Coleridge plans to organize a statewide gathering of concerned citizens and activists for the purpose of formulating a coordinated campaign or action related to the issues of corporate power in the state of Ohio.

Administration of Survey

Because of the group's makeup and background, it we decided that the best way to reach the population was via an electronic survey. We created the survey in an electronic program, 2-Way. This system allowed the survey to be administered electronically enabling all data to be collected and processed more easily. Once the survey was developed, Coleridge drafted an email with the link to the survey embedded in the message. Members of the list were encouraged to respond. 454 emails were sent with a total response rate of 12%. In order to increase the response rate an electronic Microsoft Word version was also created and sent through email by Coleridge. We received 37 responses via 2-Way, 18 emailed, and one through the Post Office. Due to an error in the paper version some questions were omitted from the analysis.

Overview of Demographic Data

Of those that responded to the survey, 55% were female and 45% were male; 95% were Euro-American/White; 77% were 45 years old or older; 70% had a household income above \$30,000; 80% hold college degrees (41% with Bachelor's and 39% with a graduate degree); 89% are Ohio residents; only 18% are union members. Another interesting finding is that 36% are self-employed, 30% work for non-profit organizations and 14% work for government agencies. Only 13% work for corporations, yet no significant differences existed amongst these respondents and others in terms of their opinions on corporations (see below).

The respondent's political ideology fell between 62% on the left, 27% liberal, and 9% reported middle-of-the-road. When looking at political affiliations, the top three responses are 43% Democrat, 39% feminist and 36% Green.

The top four organizations that the respondents reported being affiliated with were: political parties (52%), networks (50%), coalitions (48%), and basic activist organizations (46%). It is also important to look at participation in issue-oriented organizations: peace (89%), environmental (68%), anti-poverty (66%), anti-corporate globalization (64%), human rights (61%), civil rights (54%), feminist (43%), labor (38%) and, student (32%).

Because the focus and mission of the organization relates to corporate power, it is important that the survey look at the attitudes of its members. As one would expect of people who are concerned with the relationship between corporations and democracy, respondents are highly critical of corporations. Survey respondents "strongly agreed" with the following statements: 80% that corporations care more about profits than their workers, 64% corporations are the heart of many of

society's problems (9% neutral or disagreed), 62% corporations have too little government regulation (7% neutral or disagreed), 70% corporations do not need lower taxes (5% neutral or disagreed) and 54% reported that corporations only care about profits (5% neutral or disagreed). When considering a number of possible issues related to corporations to focus upon, respondents overwhelmingly prioritized issues of "corporate personhood"—not surprising since the OCCLAD list centers around the idea of legalized "personhood" rights of corporations. The second priority emphasized was corporate influence on elections (predictable given the high-participation in political party organizing and unanimous 2004 election voting by respondents). Corporate control of media and the privatization of basic services (health care, education, utilities) were the next important issues, followed by less support for environmental destruction, influence on poorer countries, and exploitation of workers.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The sample we studied tended to be White, college-educated, middle- to senior-aged, tended to have strong links to other social movements (particularly peace), have worked with a wide-variety of organization types (except unions 16% and worker cooperatives 1%) and support a wide-variety of tactics (except sabotage 14%). From these and other findings a number of possible directions surface:

1. *If broadening and diversifying the base of support is desired*, less-privileged sectors of Ohioan society should be targeted, primarily younger, non-college educated, and people of color. Even though the number of respondents who have worked with unions is roughly consistent with the greater population, more outreach to labor unions and working people would seem important.
2. *If working within the existing constituency is desired*, working with the strengths and experiences of activists is sensible. The respondents have a diverse appreciation of tactics, wide experience in multiple different movements and organization types, and 50% have over 5 years of interest in issues regarding corporations (one-third with 10 or more years). Given this, the collective knowledge, interpretation, and experience of these respondents is itself a powerful asset. Putting these minds and hands together in a room might create an interesting synthesis and well-informed strategy as to where the anti-corporate movement should head next.
3. *If there were only a limited number of issues to focus on*, the OCCLAD survey suggests what these might be the following. Issues of corporate personhood and elections speak directly to respondents. To foster support and retain interest of those with other priorities, it might be worthwhile to organize around other issue areas, and in doing so, emphasize the centrality of corporate personhood. Broadening the base of support might require also broadening the issues of importance, as well as finding ways to explain "personhood" to other audiences.
4. *If evolving OCCLAD is desired*, 88% said they would or might be interested in being part of OCCLAD's future direction, while 96% said that OCCLAD maybe or should form a more formal and structured organization (with the greatest majority, 77%, saying "maybe"). These findings suggest that, at least amongst active list members who responded to the survey, that there is a high interest in participating with OCCLAD, although list membership might need examples and ideas to convince them that a more formal and structured organization is needed.