Committee on Labor Relations 2011 Annual Report

Submitted by:
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1) Please list your Committee, Commission or Task Force Objectives and Responsibilities as stated in your group’s charge:

**Objectives**
The Labor Relations Committee (LRC) was authorized by the AAA Executive Board on May 3, 2008. The Committee was formed to be a permanent successor to the Commission on Labor Relations, which had been established after labor difficulties forced the AAA to move its meeting from San Francisco to Atlanta in 2005. The official responsibilities of the LRC are (1) to provide the Executive Board information relevant to decisions about the scheduling of AAA annual meetings; (2) to provide the Executive Board information about labor conditions relevant to other decisions with respect to vendors and subcontractors; and (3) to seek information exchanges with other scholarly associations with respect to the above.

The LRC has also decided to embark in a long-term project of documenting the working conditions of academic anthropologists around the world.

**Responsibilities**
See "objectives."

2) Please list your Group’s goals, activities and accomplishments/products for the designated Period in relation to the AAA’s long range plan:

**Goal 1:**
not applicable

**Activity:**
not applicable

**Accomplishment/Product:**
not applicable

**Explain any Gaps or Lack of Accomplishment Product:**
not applicable

**Relevant Objective in Long-Range Plan:**
not applicable

3) Provide any additions or proposed changes to goals, activities, products or outcomes for the designated period:
Goals:
not applicable

Proposed Changes:
None

Activities:
None

Proposed Changes:
None

Products/Outcomes:
None

Proposed Changes:
None

4) Provide plans for 2012 in relation to existing or new goals/activities and relationship to the Objective in the Committee's or Commission's Charge and Long-Range Plan Objective (if not self-evident). Identify if they represent significant changes or elaborations on existing goals, objective activities, charge etc:

Committee/Commission Objective 1:
not applicable

LRP Objective 1:
not applicable

New Goal and or Activity 1:
not applicable
5) List financial and other resources in hand to complete the proposed work of the Committee, Commission or Task force for the coming year and explain any additional resources. Please list separately:

a. Resources in hand or being sought independent of the AAA:
   none

b. Requests for additional resources from the AAA. Specify clearly which specific goals/activities etc. require additional resources from each source:
   none

6) Have there been or do you propose any changes to the Objective or the Responsibilities of your Committee, Commission or Task Force If so, what are they and what is the rationale for them:

   Current Objective 1:
   not applicable

   Responsibility:
   not applicable

   Proposed Change:
   not applicable

   Rational for Change:
   not applicable

7) Are there issues you would like raised or recommendations would you like to make to the AAA Executive Board related to the work of your committee commission or task force?

Most of this questionnaire seems inapplicable to our activities over the past year. The below describes our activities and plans:

The activities of the LRC in 2011 focused on two issues:

(1) Because of the strong reactions of many AAA members to the events in San Francisco, in 2005 the Association conducted a referendum about guidelines for the location of future meetings. Members were asked to choose between requiring meetings to be held at unionized facilities and "strongly preferring" that meetings be held at such facilities. The "strongly prefer" option received more votes. This directive was carried out in selecting sites for the 2011-2014 meetings. The great majority (83 percent) of hotel guest rooms offered at the 2011 meetings in Montreal were with unionized facilities; the AAA to date has contacted exclusively with unionized facilities for the 2012, 2013, and 2014 meetings.
In March 2011, the AAA asked the LRC to rank four bids for the 2015 meetings from western sites (two from Denver and one each from Seattle and Portland) with respect to their acceptability in terms of labor issues. The LRC was disappointed to discover that each of the four bids involved the AA offering fewer than 63 percent of its contracted sleeping rooms in unionized hotels during the peak nights of the meeting (Thursday and Friday). The LRC therefore recommended that the Executive Board (EB) of the AA accept none of the four bids and instead either widen their search for new western cities or return to cities such as San Jose and San Francisco with whom the AAA has successfully partnered in the past. The EB decided, however, to accept one of the Denver options. AAA will contract 1,000 sleeping rooms for Thursday and Friday in the unionized Denver Hyatt Regency, but the other hotels in the bid are nonunion. If the AAA room use follows the historical pattern of 2,100 to 2,200 bookings on Thursday and Friday, only 46 percent of AAA sleeping rooms would be in unionized facilities on those nights.

Jason Watkins from the AAA wrote a column in the December 2011 *Anthropology News* (AN) announcing the selection of Denver as the 2015 meeting site. The LRC wrote a column in the same issue of AN explaining the reasons why we disagreed with this choice. In effort to avoid similar problems in the future, the some LRC members (Sharryn Kasmir, Michael Chibnik, Mark Hauser) met with Jason Watkins at the Montreal meetings to discuss ways in which the LRC could be involved earlier in the site selection process. Our goal is to provide the EB with a list of cities with good labor relations in which bids are likely to include a high percentage of unionized facilities.

(2) In October 2009, Virginia Dominguez, then President-Elect of the AAA, approached the Labor Committee about the possibility of our participating in a potential AAA study of working conditions in academic anthropology. Professor Dominguez had been contacted by anthropologists concerned about issues such as spiraling expectations for publication and productivity, the intensification of the audit culture (an ensemble of techniques of performance measurement and surveillance) in all aspects of academic life, and shifting trends in career trajectory. These anthropologists suggested formed a commission or ad hoc committee on "professionalism and professional reproduction (i.e. hiring/tenure/promotion)" in anthropology that would gather data on these matters. Professor Dominguez was interested in seeing if the LRC would like to be involved in such an effort.

The LRC decided that the working conditions of academic anthropologists was an issue that we should be concerned with. As a first step, we sponsored two roundtables at the 2011 AAA meetings in Montreal, one devoted to contingent faculty and the other on the effects of the audit culture on working conditions in anthropology. Participants in the contingent faculty round table included non-tenure-track faculty and union organizers from the United States and Canada. The session included a preliminary analysis of a survey of non-tenure-track faculty in anthropology and other disciplines. The LRC hopes to be able to participate in more detailed analysis of this survey, particularly the open-ended responses. Participants in the audit culture roundtable included faculty and administrators from universities in Canada, the United States, and Mexico. Much of the roundtable discussion focused on the increasing prevalence of audit culture, which is especially influential in many universities outside of the United States. The LRC plans to continue its efforts to document the conditions of academic anthropologists across the world.