

the level of acceptable behavior.

In the competitive marketplace, the only measure of comparison is the best quality for the lowest price. Rampant consumerism conspires with this system and is an essential component for keeping it alive. Since consumers are distant from production, they seldom know what corners are cut to achieve "affordable" prices. Indoctrinated to be *consumers* rather than *citizens*, many people are concerned only about the price of a good or service instead of the condition of workplaces, the wages paid, the pollution of the environment during production, or the disposal process once their purchase is no longer useful.

Institutionalized *cooperative* structures, processes, and behaviors have the potential to provide for the needs of people far more effectively without increasing personal wealth at the expense of others. Until we let go of our need to feel we are better than others by getting "ahead" of them, competition will continue to be viewed as a good thing by the few who benefit from the system. Competition will also be viewed this way by the masses on the bottom who believe they can eventually do the same, even though their actual chances are almost nonexistent.

Where and how we can focus our efforts

The core issue is not corporations or even our economic systems, although they are connected. We feel that the greatest challenge is to shift our energy toward focusing on democracy - what it is, what it is not, and what it can be. This requires us to examine who we are as human beings. What is our nature, our potential? What are our capabilities? Grounded in such critical analysis, we can

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choose more effective strategies and actions.

WILPF branches have an expanded opportunity with this campaign to become *intentional laboratories* model-



Lauren Draper

WILPFers listen to a presentation at the Triennial Congress in St. Louis.

ing truly democratic processes in our communities. The work begins at home - each of us must look at our own colonization, dependencies, beliefs, practices, denial systems, and how we interact with others. There is much we can learn from studying other groups, such as native peoples, about social interaction and building sustainable communities. Focusing on democracy, we may find a fresh perspective with which to build bridges to other groups and find allies with whom we can work in coalition.

This does not mean we should end efforts that challenge a particular corporate law, permit, or abuse. Urgent situations deserve our attention and are excellent opportunities to educate ourselves and our communities about not only the injustice at hand, but also about the illegitimate authority of corporations and the kind of democracy we can work to establish. How can we capitalize on each situation for deeper change? How do we critique our work to make certain that we frame it as sovereign citizens who belong in charge? As we move past the first phase of this campaign, we look forward to exciting ideas coming from the branches for more activities.

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