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100 ATTEND THIRD EASTERN CONFERENCE FOR WORKPLACE DEMOCRACY

Jessica Gordon Nembhard of GEO newsletter and the University of Maryland has filed this report on the recent Eastern Conference for Workplace Democracy, a biennial meeting of worker-owned organizations in the Mid-Atlantic and Northeastern states:

"2005 was a record breaking year for the third annual meeting of worker cooperatives and work-owned companies and their supporters in Manchester, NH on the campus of Southern New Hampshire University, hosted by SNHU's School of Community Economic Development. The Eastern Conference for Workplace Democracy (ECWD) had more worker-owned business sponsors than ever before, more workshops offered than ever before and more worker-owners nominated and elected to its board, The Eastern Coordinating Council (ECC).

Participants came from as far South as The Federation of Southern Cooperatives in Epes, Alabama and Little Grill Restaurant in Harrisonburg, Virginia to as far North as Rising Tide Cooperatives in Atlantic Canada and the Canadian Federation of Worker Cooperatives. Ontario branch. The bulk of the participants were from New England, with additional representation from along the Eastern Seaboard."

"In addition, it was a record conference because the auction raised the most money ever - \$2004.50 for scholarships to the 4th ECWD in 2007 (almost doubling what was raised at the second conference in 2003). Susan Halevi Verran (Boston) agreed to coordinate the auction again; and Loren Rodgers (Ownership Associates) was the auctioneer again, this year with assistance from Ethan Miller (GEO).

The conference took place July 15-17, 2005. This year's theme was "Growing Stronger Together", to continue the momentum from the first national conference at Minneapolis in 2004. As usual, the conference had three major tracks: introduction to worker ownership; "nuts and bolts" education workshops on management, finance, marketing; and movement building. In addition, there were "open space" slots available during every workshop and participants created

their own sessions including topics such as "creating on-line communities", a report from France, and forming a Washington, DC metro area network of worker-owned companies.

William Greider, National affairs correspondent for The Nation magazine and author of "The Soul of Capitalism" was the keynote speaker. He discussed the importance of the worker ownership movement and the example set by companies such as the ones in attendance.

The offer from Professor Christina Clamp to hold the conference at SNHU was accepted in great part because of the university's School of Community Economic Development and co-op curriculum. Planners thought this would be an opportunity to discuss the relationship between worker ownership and community economic development, and a way to further include cooperative scholars. This goal was realized on the afternoon of the first day at the plenary session on "The Role of Workplace Democracy in the Community Economic Development Movement". Presenters were Michael Swack of SNHU's School of Community Economic Development; Jessica Gordon Nembhard of GEO Newsletter and the University of Maryland, College Park; Dominic Moulden of Manna Development Corporation, Washington, DC and ICA Group; and Paul Millman, Chroma Technology Corporation. Chris Clamp moderated.

Presenters agreed that community economic development is richer and more meaningful when principles of workplace democracy and worker ownership are practiced, and gave examples from history and their own organizations of how the two interact and strengthen one another.

Two business meetings were held and decisions made about how the ECWD would proceed in coming years. Participants agreed to extend an invitation to the Southern Region to hold a joint east coast conference in 2007 and to vigorously pursue such a collaboration.

Elections were held. The new Board of seven members and four alternates is composed of Ajowa Nzinga Ifateyo (GEO and eastern representative to the US Federation of Worker Cooperatives); Lynn Benander (Co-op Life, Greenfield, MA), Sue Bob (Community Builders Cooperative, Boston); Terry Daniels (Long Island Home Builders); Aaron Dawson (Equal Exchange, West Bridgewater, MA); Jessica

Gordon Nembhard; Doug Woodhouse (Little Grill Collective). Alternates are: Adam Trott (Collective Copies, Amherst, MA); Charles Uchu Strader (GAIAMhost Schuttsbury, MA); Noemi Giszpenc (Ownership Associates, Boston) and Jeremy Thaler (Once Again Nut Butter, NY).

Participants thanked the outgoing Board and advisers."