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# Child Care Employment

## **Working For Worthy Wages: The Child Care Compensation Movement, 1970-2001**

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## Author's Note

Achieving worthy wages for child care<sup>1</sup> teachers and providers has been the organizing principle of my work life for nearly thirty years. Upon graduating from college in 1970, I took a job as a child care assistant in a nonprofit parent cooperative, and for the next ten years, I worked as a teacher of infants, preschoolers and school-age children in a variety of child care programs. During the 1970s, I also began working with other teachers to improve the wages, working conditions and status of child care workers, eventually co-founding what is today the Center for the Child Care Workforce. Throughout the 1980s up to the present, I have been on the “front lines” of research, public education, policy development, organizing and advocacy efforts focused on the child care workforce.

The paper you are about to read therefore reflects the perspective of a deeply immersed player in the child care compensation movement. This involvement is both an asset and a liability. Not being a historian by training, I have consulted with many others in order to balance the limits of my memory and point of view. Specifically, I convened dialogues with other “insiders” around the issues of public awareness and education, union and community organizing, and public policy initiatives, all strategies that have been employed over the last quarter century to improve child care jobs. I also conducted in-depth interviews with a number of individuals who are involved in the child care compensation movement or related movements. And as reviewers of earlier drafts have noted, there are even more stories to be told, and important questions and themes which deserve greater exploration than I could accommodate here – for example, a comparative study of movements by nurses, teachers and home health care workers for improved pay and status; or a comparison of the ways in which the compensation movement and other organizations developed in the child care field during the same period. I hope that this history will inspire others to make contributions of their own.

I also know that there are many teachers, providers and other activists whom I was unable to consult due to time limitations, who would add much to this discussion, and without whom there would be no movement at all. While I have tried to be accurate in recounting this movement's highlights, I may have unintentionally overlooked or misconstrued important events or positions. I hope that readers will forgive any oversights, and will understand that my assessment of the movement, while critical at times, stems from a deep sense of honor and gratitude for getting to spend my working life as a part of it. My primary intention has been to reflect upon our past efforts with an eye to informing the work that remains to be done – ensuring that child care teachers and providers receive the compensation, support and respect that they, and the children and families in their care, deserve.

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<sup>1</sup> While recognizing that terminology is a subject of considerable debate among those involved in and concerned about services for young children, I use “child care” in this paper as a generic term to encompass the many types of early childhood programs, which vary with respect to their focus on education and caregiving and the ages of children served. Where appropriate, I distinguish among program types such as Head Start and pre-kindergarten programs. For more discussion of terminology, see Helburn and Bergmann (2002) and Center for Early Childhood Leadership (2001).

## Executive Summary

There is a growing consensus that in order to improve the quality of child care services in the United States, the child care workforce must be better compensated, through the use of public dollars and other sources. This consensus was not present a decade ago, even within the child care community. In examining what led to such a change in climate, this paper describes the movement to improve child care compensation over the last quarter century as viewed by one of the leaders in that effort.

The paper focuses on three distinct phases of this history. Between 1970 and 1985, the first signs of a movement surfaced as the problem of poverty-level wages was identified and publicly articulated, primarily by teachers of young children. Between 1985 and 1995, researchers demonstrated the link between low wages and the quality of services, and community and labor organizing, public awareness campaigns and public policy initiatives chipped away at the wall of silence around the issue. Between 1995 and 2001, the movement achieved greater visibility through sustained grassroots organizing efforts and creative public policy responses, driven largely by a growing child care staffing crisis, an overall economic boom in the U.S., and the passage in 1996 of national welfare reform legislation. It was also invigorated and inspired by other burgeoning economic justice movements. While not yet drawn into the mainstream of U.S. public policy debates, the issue of inadequate compensation became a staple of discourse and activity within the child care field.

The author explores each phase of the movement with respect to:

- The economic and policy climate, including the level of demand for services, public resources dedicated to child care, the characteristics of the workforce, and larger social trends in employment;
- Key players, including their relations to others within the child care community, their links to other movements, and organizational structures and alliances;
- The primary assumptions and key strategies employed by activists, including short- and long-term goals, and organizing, policy and public education approaches;
- Accomplishments, missteps and challenges.

These reflections have been synthesized from group dialogues and individual interviews with other players in the movement, and from historical documents such as newsletters, pamphlets and articles developed by various groups in the movement. The paper explores how each phase of the movement has influenced the next, and how the various challenges facing the movement have been resolved or have persisted. The final section of the paper focuses on the current tasks facing the compensation movement.

## Introduction

In 2001 and 2002, over \$100 million dollars will be spent to augment the earnings of child care teachers and providers<sup>2</sup> across the United States. These financial rewards will come in the form of annual stipends, health insurance coverage, and, for a small number, targeted, sustained pay increases. Driven in part by a robust economy in the late 1990s, combined with a growing demand for child care services and a shortage of trained child care workers, many states, including California, Illinois, New York, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Washington and Wisconsin, have initiated or expanded publicly-funded programs focused on building a more skilled and stable child care workforce. Initiatives are also being developed in Connecticut, Idaho, Kansas, Missouri and Pennsylvania. Additionally, workers in Head Start, Department of Defense and some pre-kindergarten early childhood programs are benefiting from salary enhancements built into those delivery systems (Whitebook & Eichberg, 2002; Montilla, Twombly & De Vita, 2001).

While most child care teachers and providers continue to earn poverty-level wages, and many beneficiaries of the above-mentioned compensation initiatives still are woefully underpaid, there is little argument within the child care field, and a slowly dawning awareness among policy makers, that improved services for young children in the U.S. require better compensation for the child care workforce. This level of acknowledgment was not present a decade ago, even within the child care community. In many communities, the focus is not on whether to raise wages, but on how best to do so, and a great deal of experimentation and debate is underway (Whitebook & Eichberg, 2002).

What has led to this new climate? How have the current public investments in child care jobs been achieved, and what is needed to sustain and increase them? This paper provides perspective on these questions by describing the movement to improve child care compensation over the last quarter century.

Some social change activists distinguish between social movements and efforts on behalf of a particular cause, recognizing that the distinction between the two is often not hard and fast. To qualify as a movement, it is argued, there must be a great deal of spontaneous activity, a clear, specific message, a proliferation of regional or local groups working on the issue, an ability to draw and hold public attention, and the attraction of significant additional allies, not just the people directly affected by the problem (Sen, 2001). By these criteria, it could be said that the efforts to improve child care compensation are only recently congealing into a movement, and that much of the last quarter century should be characterized as “pre-movement” work. In this paper, I identify three distinct phases of this history, which differ decidedly with respect to degrees of activity, the number of groups involved, messages and strategies, and the ability to attract supporters.

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<sup>2</sup> In this paper, I use the term “teacher” when referring to those who work in center- or school-based settings, and “provider” for those working in home-based programs.

Between 1970 and 1985, the first signs of a movement surfaced as the problem of low wages was identified and publicly articulated. Between 1985 and 1995, research demonstrated the link between low wages and the quality of services, and the wall of silence around the issue was chipped away through community and labor organizing, public awareness campaigns and public policy initiatives. Between 1995 and 2001, the movement achieved greater visibility through sustained grassroots organizing efforts and creative public policy responses, driven largely by a growing child care staffing crisis, an overall economic boom in the U.S., and the passage in 1996 of national welfare reform legislation. It was also invigorated and inspired by other burgeoning economic justice movements. While not yet drawn into the mainstream of U.S. public policy debates, the issue of inadequate compensation became a staple of discourse and activity within the child care field.

This paper explore each phase of the movement with respect to:

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- Key players, including their relations to others within the child care community, their links to other movements, and organizational structures and alliances;
- The primary assumptions and key strategies employed by activists, including short- and long-term goals, and organizing, policy and public education approaches;
- Accomplishments, missteps and challenges.

These reflections have been synthesized from four group dialogues, as well as numerous individual conversations with other activists and advocates who are knowledgeable about the movement. Many of these players are quoted throughout the paper.<sup>3</sup> I have also relied on historical materials such as newsletters, pamphlets and articles developed by various groups in the movement. Wherever possible, I have tried to show how each phase of the movement has influenced the next, and how challenges facing the movement have been resolved or have persisted. The final section of the paper focuses on lessons learned and suggests next steps for the compensation movement.

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<sup>3</sup> The dialogues were conducted through conference calls that lasted approximately 1.5 hours and included four to seven participants. The topics for the calls were organizing, public policy, and public awareness efforts. Interviews were conducted over the phone or in person.

## **Naming the Problem: 1970-1985**

### *The Setting*

President Nixon's veto of comprehensive child care legislation in 1971 plunged child care advocates into a defensive stance, which has persisted in some respects to the present. While his claim that such a program would "sovietize" American children sounds strangely archaic in the post-Cold War era, it resonated at the time with many citizens who believed that young children should be cared for at home by their mothers. Advocates would wait nearly twenty years before putting federal child care legislation forward again, and even then, what was proposed and passed was far less ambitious.

During the 1970s and early 1980s, discussion about child care was overwhelmingly disapproving. Noted child care researcher Ellen Galinsky recalls the predominant tone used when describing child care in those days:

When I first became involved in the issue, in the late sixties and the seventies, child care was seen as universally negative. That is, I always had the feeling that people thought that children were cordoned behind barbed-wire fences looking out at the world, because their evil mothers had left them to have other people raise them. In the research, the typical phrase was "daycare-reared children."

Indeed, child development researchers in the 1970s became embroiled in their own Cold War about the effects of out-of-home care on children, particularly for middle-class children, echoes of which are heard even today (Belsky & Steinberg, 1978; Belsky, 1984; NICHD, 2001).

Meanwhile, throughout this period, mothers of young children, along with women at all stages of life, entered the paid labor force in unprecedented numbers, only to face a grossly inadequate supply of services. The child care workforce expanded rapidly during these years, particularly in the center-based sector, and then as now, the workforce was predominantly female. Nearly three-quarters of center-based workers were Caucasian, in contrast to today, when women of color comprise nearly half of this sector of the industry (Whitebook, Sakai, Gerber & Howes, 2001; Krajec, Bloom, Talan & Clark, 2001). Turnover was low by today's standards, at about 15 percent a year. Center-based workers, on average, were slightly better-educated as a group than they are today (Ruopp, Travers, Glantz & Coelen, 1979). Home-based providers during this period were found to be exclusively female, but diverse with respect to licensing status, level of education and training, and number of children cared for. Their educational levels were generally lower than those of center-based employees, and their earnings were exceptionally low (Keyserling, 1972; Divine-Hawkins, 1981).

In its landmark 1972 report, *Windows on Day Care*, the National Council of Jewish Women spoke to the inadequate supply and quality of child care services:

Large numbers of children are neglected; still larger numbers now receive care which, at best, can be called only custodial, and which, at its worst, is deplorable. Only a relatively small proportion are benefiting from truly developmental quality care.

The plight of child care workers was central to the report's analysis. Along with a large federal investment in child care services and the expansion of training opportunities, it recommended eliminating the "substandard wage scales and excessively long hours of day care personnel," making "professional salaries commensurate with those in elementary education."<sup>4</sup> Anticipating criticism of such a recommendation, the report argued:

Those interested in children must face the reality that good care is expensive, because good care requires people of ability and training who must be paid adequately if they are to be attracted to this field of work. The quality of day care depends on what we are willing to pay those who are responsible for it. We are shortchanging children when pay scales such as those reported by survey participants were found characteristic of so large a proportion of centers, both nonprofit and proprietary.

Clearly, when wage scales such as those reported occur so widely and on so large a scale, we are asking thousands of non-professional workers to subsidize the care of children of other women. We are also excluding from the day care field many women of intelligence and competence who cannot afford to accept salaries as low as some of those described, no matter how rewarding is work with youngsters in human terms (Keyserling, 1972).

Then as now, concerns about the salaries of child care workers competed early on with concerns about the cost of child care services for parents. In recounting her experiences as an advisor to the National Day Care Study conducted by Abt Associates,<sup>5</sup> nationally recognized child care expert Gwen Morgan recalls:

Their first draft report suggested that there might be savings in larger group size, and slightly lower ratios, and that the savings could be used to reduce the price. Two of us in the advisory group objected, because if there were savings through the staffing pattern, surely the savings should go to paying more to the staff. To his credit, Dick Ruopp [the study's

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<sup>4</sup> The NCJW report did not directly address whether wage increases should be related to specific levels of education and training, whether professional preparation should be similar to that of elementary school teachers, and whether increases should extend to all who work in "day care" settings, including both "non-professional workers" and those who are called "women of competence and intelligence."

<sup>5</sup> This study, *Day Care Centers in the U.S., A National Profile 1976-1977*, also documented the problem of inadequate wages (Ruopp et al., 1979): "While the great majority of these staff earn more than the minimum wage, day care classroom staff are paid far less than the average annual salary of public school teachers. Even those staff whose salaries are at the upper end of the average salary range are earning barely enough to support a family."



director] responded to those comments, and the study did analyze the interrelationship between three factors: ratios, price and salaries. It was their chart, showing how these factors affect each other, that led to a much better understanding of the systems issue, which later we began to call the “trilemma.”

The child care “trilemma” to which Morgan refers is the interrelationship among salaries, affordability and supply, particularly in subsidized care. If salaries remained low, the study found, then more children could be served with the same amount of public dollars. From the very earliest discussion of child care wages, the issue was overshadowed by other financial concerns that were considered more compelling by policy makers and even by advocates.

In many ways, the child care compensation movement emerged within the larger movement for affordable, high-quality child care, which itself was weakened and directionless for most of the 1970s and early 1980s. The defeat of the Comprehensive Child Care Act in 1971 dispersed the broad-based coalition of groups that had worked for its passage, and no new solutions to the issues of affordability and quality readily replaced the vision of a comprehensive national program. In addition, the debate about the role of women and the most appropriate environment for young children raged on.

By and large, neither the labor movement nor the women’s movement actively pursued child care policy and organizing strategies during this period. Union organizing focused on workers in publicly-contracted programs in Massachusetts, California and New York; elsewhere, there was minimal union interest in the child care worker organizing, particularly in small programs that did not receive public dollars. According to Barbara Reisman, the former Executive Director of the Child Care Action Campaign, and a trade union activist in the 1970s:

Women were just becoming more active and more accepted in leadership roles in the trade union movement. And child care [as a job benefit for union members with young children] was certainly brought up as a bargaining issue, but then it was one of those things that easily slid off the table in favor of straight wage increases.

The organized women’s movement was deeply ambivalent about taking a leading role around child care. In some ways, feminist activists wanted to get as far away from traditional women’s work as they possibly could (Maclean, 1999). Demands for universal 24-hour child care notwithstanding, there was no focus on the working women who were actually providing care, or on the issues of child care quality and children’s developmental needs. Child care problems also tended to highlight class distinctions among women, which at that time were not often openly discussed. Reisman comments on the problematic role of the women’s movement in moving these issues forward on a broader scale:

I'm not a historian of the feminist movement, so this is a personal view, but I think that the women's movement, in its rebirth in the late 1960s, always put child care on the agenda – but it wasn't up very high. That was partly because, to the extent that the women's movement took up child care as an issue, there was a sense that it was reinforcing women's traditional roles, so it was better to talk about other issues. At the same time, at the Child Care Action Campaign, one of the things that the leadership always said was, *child care is not just a women's issue*. So we worked hard to get more men involved. But in many ways, [the women's movement] traded away the potential power of the people who are most passionate about the issue, which is mothers.

Advocates focused on young children ignored the compensation problem as well, their energies drawn into the massive transformations occurring within the early childhood field during this period. In addition to an influx of teachers and providers resulting from the increasing demand for services, many new positions emerged for directors, trainers, resource and referral agency staff, owners of for-profit centers, and entrepreneurs of companies supplying materials to child care programs. The ranks of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)<sup>6</sup> swelled several-fold during this period, with members drawn increasingly from among those who did not work directly with young children in a classroom or home on a daily basis. The leadership of NAEYC was comprised primarily of academics and other highly-educated, predominantly white professionals, only some of whom had had direct experience working with young children on a daily basis, and most of whom had little familiarity with full-day child care, as opposed to the half-day nursery school programs which were prevalent in an earlier era.

“Professionalism” became a watchword in the field, and as employed in this context, specifically excluded discussions of one's economic needs as a worker.<sup>7</sup> While the National Council of Jewish Women had distinguished between “non-professional aides” and “professional teachers” in its 1971 report, the notion that anyone working in child care was or could become a “professional” held tremendous sway by the end of the decade, particularly within NAEYC. At the same time, for-profit child care business

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<sup>6</sup> Founded in 1926 as the National Association of Nursery Education (NANE), the National Association for the Education of Young Children's membership nearly tripled between 1975 and 1995, with a current membership of over 100,000 organized into more than 450 affiliate groups throughout the country. Official literature states that “membership is open to all who share a desire to serve and act on behalf of the needs and rights of young children.” For a discussion of the organization's history, see Hewes, 1996; NAEYC, 2001; and Urban Institute, 2001.

<sup>7</sup> Sociologists identify a number of benchmarks for the development of an “occupation” into a “profession,” such as defining a distinct and exclusive body of knowledge, establishing training and certification processes, increasing political influence, and increasing the economic well-being of its members. Within the mainstream of the early childhood field, however, strategies focused on improving pay and related efforts were said to “deflect our energies away from the quality of life we provide our children” (Katz, 1994), and were set in opposition to professional behavior.

owners, whose success rested in large part on low wages for teaching staff, became organized into their own associations, creating new debates within the field about regulation, training, personnel management and other business practices.

### *Key Players*

Against this backdrop, small groups of child care teachers in a number of communities across the country – Ann Arbor, Berkeley/San Francisco, Boston, Madison, Minneapolis, and New Haven– began to talk about child care wages and working conditions. While these groups emerged separately from each other, their members shared many characteristics. Predominantly white, young and college-educated, often in the field of early childhood education, they were veterans of the women’s, civil rights and anti-war movements of the late 1960s. A relatively large number of men working in centers were also drawn to these groups, well out of proportion to the overall number of men in the child care workforce.

Most described their work with young children in political terms, as being central to women’s liberation, racial equality and economic equity. As a result, they found the contrast between their idealistic view of the high potential of child care work, and the low value placed on it not only by society but by early childhood education leaders, the women’s movement and labor unions, deeply disturbing. Given the orientation of the times, it was an easy step to view improving child care jobs as a political cause. Peggy Haack, currently the Worthy Wage Coordinator for the Center for the Child Care Workforce and a child care teacher/provider for more than two decades, was active in MACWU, the Madison (Wisconsin) Child Care Workers United. Nancy DeProse is a Boston-area activist and a founder of BADWU (Boston Area Day Care Workers United), the precursor of a statewide union movement for which she has served as a UAW organizer for many years. Both voiced similar perspectives during our conversations about the early phases of the movement:

Haack: My first child care experience was a very, very oppressive work environment that put me on the path to activism as soon as I got out of college. I thought, "Oh my God, what is happening here?" I got involved with several people who formed a support group and met for Sunday brunch. We were bonded by the fact that we knew that what was happening in child care was wrong. We were largely white and well-educated. We were really idealistic, and we considered our child care work as political activity, because we had been engaged in other social change movements and realized how those experiences had transformed us. We were all poor, but there was a strong sense of purpose and self-satisfaction in working for a cause we believed in so strongly. I think that is the interesting thing: I look back, and it was a really good time in my life. We were going to change the world! The people who were gathered together were all from small nonprofits, all taking care of poor children, engaged with families and really wanting to make a change in society. We realized early on that we had to support each other because life was unfair.

So at the same time that we were trying to change things, we were initially quite a cohesive group who enjoyed being together and working together.

DeProse: I have always thought my education at Wheelock College was somewhat responsible for my decision to organize. They did everything they could to convince me not to go into child care; they thought that it was not a professional field. I had received that good education from them, and had been taught about quality early care and education programming. So when I got to my first day care center I realized that the actual situation going on was nothing like they said early care and education should be.

Teachers in these groups were aware of the challenges facing the larger child care movement:

DeProse: The other thing that was going on was that people still were thinking women should be working at home, and so child care was totally not accepted as an industry that should even exist. Women were organizing around just being able to demand more child care. There really was not a provider movement or an advocacy movement or anything at that point. There were just women demanding child care, and child care workers trying to figure out what they were going to do to make it better. That was the scene in Massachusetts...During this period, people didn't want anyone to say anything bad about child care, because they thought it would keep society from supporting it. So if we admitted that quality wasn't good or that pay was inadequate, it would just be fuel for those who thought that women should stay at home.

Although members of these groups recognized the pressures facing the larger movement for child care, a reciprocal awareness of child care workers' plight on the part of women's organizations would only come much later. In addition to their commitments to economic justice and racial equality, these teacher activists were, by and large, steeped in child development practice and theory and proud of that knowledge base. They believed their professionalism was melded with sensitivity to issues of economic justice, racial equality and cultural diversity, and felt stung by an emerging feminist critique of efforts to professionalize caregiving, which were believed to undermine low-income communities and cultures (Joffe, 1977). In addition, it often appeared as if feminist leaders only called upon child care workers when it came to caring for their own children, or to provide child care during women's movement meetings and events.

More promising collaborations began to develop between members of these fledgling child care worker groups and organized labor. Almost all of these communities made attempts to unionize, with varying degrees of success, as discussed below. While they did not necessarily agree on how to conduct a union campaign, these activists shared a central commitment to improving the wages and status of child care workers. In contrast, during this period, many of them experienced highly strained relationships

within the early care and education field, facing resistance both from co-workers and leaders as they sought to make compensation an issue. Joan Lombardi, former Director of the Child Care Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, during the Clinton administration, began her career as a Head Start teacher and as a center director. With respect to co-workers during this period, she notes that:

In 1978 or '79, compensation was not an issue. People didn't talk about it. It was a time where people really felt like they should just do this work for "the love of kids," and that was it. Most of the work in the beginning was just documenting that [low pay] was a problem.

The notion that women worked for "pin money," rather than to support themselves and their families, was only beginning to be displaced. Discomfort with talking about financial matters, coupled with a dominant ethos in the field that one worked with children out of love rather than financial need, squelched open discussion about poor compensation. Politics, age and style also came into play. The child care teacher advocates were progressive activists, comfortable with challenging the status quo. Typically, they were a decade or two younger than much of the early childhood leadership, and generational tensions of the time spilled over into these relationships. The advocates saw the leadership (or "establishment") as stodgy, conservative and out-of-date. The leadership saw the advocates as un-ladylike, unprofessional, and self-involved.<sup>8</sup> On more than one occasion, various teacher activists were pulled aside by leaders and mentors in the field and urged to "let the compensation issue go," and to focus instead on the real issues of classroom practice and the needs of children. To those who came of age in the "personal is political" era, this "guidance" seemed insulting and downright wrong.

The organizational structures first adopted by these teachers resembled consciousness-raising or support groups. Typically, the groups were small collectives that operated on consensus decision-making. The Berkeley group was an outgrowth of a class offered by a community adult school run by local progressive activists. It first called itself East Bay Workers in Child Care, offering drop-in support sessions for child care teachers and developing handouts addressing specific problems such as breaks, inadequate materials, unpaid overtime, and lack of input into decision-making at their centers. Reflecting the movement's difficult search for a vocabulary and an identity, and the debate within the overall field about nomenclature, the East Bay Workers group next called itself the Child Care Staff Education Project, and formally incorporated as the Child Care Employee Project (CCEP) in 1980. In 1994, CCEP relocated to Washington, D.C., briefly calling itself the National Center for the Early Childhood Workforce before settling in 1997 upon the name, Center for the Child Care Workforce (CCW).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The use of the term "worker" for child care teachers by members of these groups was one issue that especially created tension among those promoting early childhood education as a profession. The profession-oriented contingent largely believed that achieving better training would automatically lead to higher pay, while the teacher advocates, who were mostly well-trained, believed that education and training must be linked to higher pay, but that change would occur only through organizing.

<sup>9</sup> To some extent, changes in strategy or emphasis were reflected in each of these name changes. As East Bay Workers in Child Care, the group was comprised exclusively of child care teachers focused on

In the mid-1970s, the Boston Area Day Care Workers United (BADWU) first affiliated with the largely health care-oriented union 1199, but found that at least in that area of the country, the union was not prepared to deal with small child care workplaces. They next affiliated with District 65, UAW, which had a progressive and democratic tradition as well as extensive experience in organizing both small and large workplaces. The Madison Area Child Care Workers United (MACWU), which modeled its name after the Boston group, created a support network for child care teachers and developed a newsletter and outreach to other groups doing support work. An early unionizing effort with a small independent union of restaurant workers did not take off, and soon thereafter, the unionized Madison centers affiliated with the UAW.

Similar groups in Ann Arbor, Minneapolis, and elsewhere shared the collective structure. While initially formed by teachers, some expanded to include home-based providers, directors and others who were committed to improving child care compensation. Typically, these non-teacher supporters were also sixties activists and feminists who were sympathetic to the perspectives and goals of these groups.

In many ways, these activists saw themselves as isolated warriors, because the other constituencies from which they had emerged or with whom they identified – the women's movement, the early education field, and in many communities, the labor movement – had little interest in dealing with the issue of child care workers' economic needs. This isolation made their connections with one another all the more important. In 1979, at the annual NAEYC conference in Atlanta, members of the Berkeley group made a presentation about working conditions and status which they later recalled as “raising more eyebrows than support” (Child Care Employee News, 1982). At the 1980 NAEYC conference in San Francisco, activists from California, Madison, Ann Arbor, Boston and Minneapolis found each other and agreed to plan a session on employee issues for the following year in Detroit. Those who were present at the 1981 session – most of them still active in the compensation movement – often recall the irony and symbolism of having more people on the panel than in the audience for this day-long event. The following year, at the association's conference in Washington, D.C., these same groups formed the Child Care Employee Caucus within NAEYC, which continues to the present day as the Worthy Wage Caucus. The Caucus articulated specific demands to make NAEYC more responsive to the needs of those who work directly with young children.<sup>10</sup>

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improving workplace conditions. The adoption of the name Child Care Staff Education Project occurred as the group sought to reach out to other teachers who might not identify with the term worker. The Child Care Employee Project name reflected the group's emphasis on center-based care, and the plight of all the workers therein. When the organization became the National Center for the Early Childhood Workforce, “national” was included to signal a broader focus, “early childhood” was intended to be inclusive of Head Start, pre-kindergarten and other workers who did not identify with the term “child care,” and “workforce” was adopted to address all sectors of the industry. But this name proved unwieldy and confusing (some even thought it was a group focused on child labor), leading to the simpler “Center for the Child Care Workforce.”

<sup>10</sup> Hopes for and skepticism about change within NAEYC were reflected in this decision to form an employee caucus. The CCEP News issue following the conference led with the headline, “NAEYC: Nap Time Over?” (CCEP, 1983). The initial resolutions passed by the Child Care Employee Caucus included:

Over the next two decades, the Caucus would serve as a vehicle for sharing information and raising awareness (some might say, a ruckus) within the larger professional community. In 1981, the California-based Child Care Employee Project (CCEP) received funding from the Rosenberg Foundation to produce a national newsletter for the movement, and the following year, CCEP agreed to take on the coordination of the Caucus. During this initial phase, there was a high level of agreement among the member groups, even though they were pursuing somewhat different strategies, as discussed below. All shared a loosely-defined expectation that NAEYC would eventually carry the mantle of child care workers' needs, as had occurred for public school teachers within such organizations as the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers. But enlisting official NAEYC support for the cause proved to be a much more formidable challenge than activists anticipated, with the association focusing at this time on issues of professional development and highly resistant to almost all of the Caucus's demands. Yet NAEYC's largely negative response at least had the benefit of solidifying the Caucus as an opposition force, and further fortifying the growing ties among its members.<sup>11</sup>

### *Primary Assumptions and Key Strategies*

Reflecting the influences of their previous political activities, the teacher activists in these groups understood that improving the wages, working conditions and status of child care workers would require a variety of strategies. Traditional workplace organizing was viewed as an important tool for improving child care jobs, but it was also necessary to pursue a public policy strategy to leverage additional public resources beyond parent fees to create the necessary funding base for change. From the onset, this movement was about more than improving the lot of child care workers. They connected the well-being of children and families with their own well-being. Teacher advocates were explicit about the link between the quality of child care jobs and the quality of services. They wanted more respect and better pay for themselves, but they were just as deeply committed to upgrading the care and education of young children, and to making child care affordable

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establishing a regular column in the NAEYC journal *Young Children* dealing with working conditions; earmarking some NAEYC membership action grants for projects that support worker concerns; increasing NAEYC members' involvement in selecting conference topics; increasing employee-related conference sessions; creating a sliding fee scale for conference registration based on salary; and arranging accommodations at the conference that child care workers could afford.

<sup>11</sup> Only the requests for more conference sessions on workforce issues, and for membership action grants, were accepted by NAEYC. Throughout the 1980s until the mid-1990s, when the NAEYC leadership eliminated it, Caucus members used the Membership Expression of Opinion before the Governing Board as the main vehicle for publicizing its concerns at the annual conference. Along with other progressive activists within the organization who were focused on anti-bias education, gay and lesbian rights, and anti-violence issues, Caucus members staged creative and elaborate displays and demonstrations. These served to draw many new supporters to the various causes, and also greatly increased the rancor between the activists and the NAEYC leadership. Those who had come to child care through their progressive politics saw nothing wrong with this mode of protest, whereas many in the organization, which was comprised of the full spectrum of national political opinion, were surprised or put off by it.

and accessible for all families. The Child Care Employee Project's earliest materials carried the following statement, which was echoed in the writings of other groups:

CCEP believes that the quality of care children receive is directly linked to the working conditions of their caregivers. Low pay, unpaid overtime, lack of benefits and little input into decision-making create tension in programs and lead to high staff turnover. The exit of trained staff from the field gnaws away at the morale of those who remain, and limits efforts to build consistent, responsive environments for children (Child Care Employee News, 1982).

While these groups shared a high level of agreement about the nature and consequences of the problems, various groups emphasized different strategies. Early on, CCEP focused on documenting the problem, while BADWU committed its energy to organizing and state policy work. But along with its union drive and its coalition work on state policy with other social service and trade union groups, BADWU also worked on a statewide salary and benefits survey in coordination with the Boston-area resource and referral agency. Likewise, CCEP worked closely with District 65 members who were seeking to organize for-profit child care centers in northern California, operated a child care worker support group, engaged in local political campaigns, and developed many training and educational materials for teachers and providers. All of the groups attacked the problem from several directions, recognizing that no single strategy would work by itself, and learning from each other's successes and failures. While they shared a belief in public support for an expanded, high-quality system for the education and care of young children, there were few specific demands or campaigns addressing financing and public resources at this point in time. Throughout this period there were debates within and among the groups, but conflicts over strategy seldom surfaced very openly, perhaps because the ongoing conflicts with groups outside of the Caucus served to limit internal dissension.

The most active groups of the period, working in Madison, Boston, Minneapolis, Berkeley, and Ann Arbor, all articulated ambitious agendas for themselves. In discussing the early years of BADWU, for example, Nancy DeProse recalls:

BADWU had a three-pronged mission: 1) to organize workplaces; 2) to bring people together around talking about how to improve the quality of care in our centers; and 3) to bring people together around political action.

Written materials from BADWU in this period identified the following specific goals:

- acknowledge that child care is worthwhile work;
- give workers input into their working conditions and the quality of care through a union contract;
- make child care work a career that people can consider staying in by increasing pay and benefits, developing stable and secure



- funding sources, and offering free in-service training;
- develop the attitude that child care is an economically essential program in this country, and strengthen parental options for their children's care;
- educate child care workers about the politics of day care and include them in policy formulation, advocacy and lobbying (Child Care Employee News, 1982).

When CCEP published its study of 95 San Francisco child care center teachers, "Who's Minding the Child Care Workers? A Look at Staff Burn-out," in *Children Today* in 1981, the article was circulated among teachers and advocates around the country (Whitebook, Howes, Darrah & Friedman, 1981). The study identified low pay as the major source of staff burn-out and turnover, and laid out the following blueprint for change, including research, policy work, organizing and training:

To meet the needs of child care staff for a decent income and of parents for affordable services, either government or industry will have to bear its share of the cost. Obtaining increased financial support will require changing the prevailing view that child care is unskilled work and enhancing public appreciation of it. As long as child care work is considered unskilled, this will be reflected in its pay and status.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, already overworked child care staff members must join together to inform the public about their work's value and the level of skill required. This involves informing legislators and policy makers of work conditions and defining the minimum employment standards that need to be included in future legislation and guides for establishing centers. It requires pressuring organizations that represent child care workers, like the National Association for the Education of Young Children, to focus more of their resources on working conditions. Finally, organizations might be created to help workers share ideas about break and substitute policies, contracts and health insurance, and to offer workers support.

Amelioration of the situation that leads to burn-out requires changes within centers and in the broader community. Tackling burn-out by reassessing a center's existing organization can be time-consuming and initially awkward. But such a process can also have the effect of energizing staff and improving work relations by helping workers see that they are not personally responsible for their unsatisfactory working

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<sup>12</sup> The assertion that child care was skilled work flew in the face of education and training regulations of the period, which then as now, require little in the way of pre- or in-service training for those who work with young children in child care settings. (Requirements for Head Start and pre-kindergarten teachers were and continue to be typically higher in most states). In part this assertion reflected the groups' feminist perspective and the widespread emphasis on the hidden competencies involved in traditional women's work. In part the assertion may have reflected the groups' composition of women with high levels of formal education and specialized early childhood training.

conditions. It can be a valuable beginning in addressing the larger tasks that face the field: publicizing and legitimizing child care work, and allocating to it the social and financial resources it needs and deserves.

### *Accomplishments, Missteps and Challenges*

To what extent did these groups, either individually or collectively, make progress during this early phase of the movement? Despite the often negative reception to their message, these groups accomplished an important shift within the early childhood field. Simply put, child care teachers became visible in many ways as they never had before. Gwen Morgan recounts how much discussion there was at the time about child care quality and looking at the “whole picture”:

What changed, I think, was that...you didn't just go away. You kept coming back with the facts and the figures and the organizing. So I think that gave people a much broader sense that there's no way you can solve child care problems at the expense of the people who work in child care.

It became more and more difficult to ignore the organized groups of teachers at conferences and meetings, in combination with reports that documented their low pay and inadequate benefits. While many of the issues raised had already been articulated by the National Council of Jewish Women in the early 1970s, there was something more compelling in the fact that teachers themselves were now raising them. These groups made the profession as a whole take notice of child care workers whether they wanted to or not. Although their words and efforts did not quickly move the field as a whole to action, their messages resonated with many center staff, family child care providers, researchers, trainers and other practitioners, many of whom would join the movement over the next decade.

Through their various activities, these groups were also developing much-needed language for discussing how staff working conditions influenced children's learning environments. While hesitant about nomenclature, and the extent to which wages should be emphasized over other workplace issues, the initial writings and discussions among these groups jump-started a process of defining the new movement's most pressing issues.

The early studies conducted by CCEP, Kathy Modigliani in Ann Arbor, the Minnesota Child Care Workers' Alliance and others also broke important ground in the arena of “action research.” Using their extensive knowledge of the child care world, they developed and piloted surveys of teachers and providers that remain the basis of much of the workforce research done today. Recognizing the limits of their own fledgling research skills, they enlisted the help of more established academics and activists, and were able to produce credible, breakthrough reports.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps most importantly, they were aware of

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<sup>13</sup> CCEP enlisted assistance for their San Francisco child care worker study from child development researchers Carollee Howes and Emmy Werner. They also obtained help from Bob Fitzgerald of the National Jury Project in training teachers who volunteered to collect data. Staff at BANANAS Resource

how these data could be used not only to advance but also to hinder the cause. CCEP, in particular, developed articles to help teacher activists “make salary statistics work for, not against you.” (CCEP News, 1984)

The other major contribution of these groups during this period was to explore the applicability of popular social change strategies – most notably, comparable worth and unionization – to the plight of child care teachers, revealing in the process, if not resolving, the particular challenges facing the child care workforce. In the early 1980s, comparable worth provided the theoretical basis for much of the organizing around pay equity and affirmative action for women in other industries, including clerical workers and others employed in hospitals and on college campuses (Maclean, 1999). But early on, child care activists realized that the structure of most of their industry – small jobs which typically did not employ other classifications of male workers - made comparable worth more useful as a public awareness strategy than as a specific method to remedy discrimination, which could not legally be proven in most child care settings (Ginsburg and Whitebook, 1986).

The active communities had widely varying experiences related to union organizing – shaped largely by different circumstances in their states with respect to prior organizing and the structure of public funding – and as a result, a great deal of discussion in the early days of the movement focused on the applicability of unionization to the child care workforce. In California, for example, many of the publicly funded centers housed in the public schools had been organized shortly after World War II, and many Head Start programs in southern California were organized in the 1960s, but attempts in the late 1970s to organize community-based state-subsidized nonprofits in San Francisco were not able to withstand budget cuts. In addition, many of the teachers who were active in CCEP were working in small, independent nonprofits that were unable to attract the unions’ attention. By contrast, a wide network of state-contracted centers in Massachusetts lent itself more readily to the successful organizing drive begun by BADWU and District 65 in the late 1970s. Madison activists had moderate success with organizing city-funded centers serving low-income families on vouchers.

As progressive activists, these teachers were generally pro-union in principle, whether they were engaged in a union organizing drive or not. They understood that workers in other occupations had traditionally improved their jobs through collective bargaining strategies, and saw the need for an organization to protect and represent child care workers on the job as well as in the larger political arena. They also saw that a union contract could ensure manageable teacher/child ratios, adequate break and classroom preparation time, and greater staff input into decision making which would lead to improved care for children. Nancy DeProse recalls:

When we started the idea of a union in the seventies, we did not think

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and Referral (Oakland) and the San Francisco Children’s Council provided support in the development and execution of the project. The entire study budget of \$200 was raised through events and donations; part of it went to help one of the teachers buy an appropriate outfit for visiting centers.

about anything else as a possible solution. We needed to have a worker's say in what was going on in child care, and that seemed to be the only way to go at it. So that is what started it here; we really believed unionization was going to be what worked for us because it had worked for other professions.

A 1983 article in the Child Care Employee News delineated the many positive reasons to unionize, as one response to the run-of-the mill anti-unionism that was so prevalent at the time – frequently used by opponents to discredit Child Care Employee Caucus members, CCEP and the movement as a whole. But the article also outlined several of the serious barriers to union organizing in child care:

- Small shops in child care deliver little in dues revenue to unions;
- Workers organizing in small workplaces are easily identified and vulnerable;
- Unions are resistant to organizing such a fragmented workforce, particularly given high levels of staff turnover; and
- Unions can be resistant to adapting their traditional strategies to the specific needs of child care work sites, particularly the close personal relationships between clients and workers, and sometimes management (directors) and staff.

Teachers voiced concern about becoming lost within a larger organization, where many fellow union members might have stereotyped, negative views of child care and child care workers. In California, this concern was largely traceable to the experience of school-based child care center teachers, who had joined a public school teachers' union and, many felt, had become second-class citizens within it. Some teacher activists also feared that by unionizing, they might become isolated from or “lost to” the larger compensation movement. According to Peggy Haack, some Madison teachers found it difficult to maintain a satisfying relationship with a union:

In Wisconsin we were at a disadvantage because we did not have contracted centers. Wisconsin always had a voucher system, and so we did not have the leverage that others did to go after the big programs and organize them. Other types of child care programs didn't necessarily fit with the union. As much as it seemed like the right path, we did not know how to do it, people were not prepared to do it, it took so much time to accomplish, and it was not a very compassionate model. Key leadership roles in the fledgling union movement were held by men, and in a female-dominated field, that put off some people.

The issue of the “teacher voice” stood out as a unique feature of the child care movement from its inception. The on-the-job experiences of teachers were the cornerstone of the movement, and they were reflected in the framing of the issues and strategies and the development of resource materials. The groups that were not actively involved in union organizing at this point, such as CCEP, the Minneapolis Child Care

Workers Alliance, some of the MACWU teachers and the Ann Arbor group, nonetheless developed strategies to support community organizing and to build teacher skills as advocates and leaders. This emphasis on the teacher voice reflected a synthesis of the consciousness-raising strategies many had learned in the women's movement, and the early care and education field's emphasis on the importance of making each individual feel nurtured and respected. During this period, the movement also began to develop its public voice. As media reports about the McMartin Preschool child abuse case flooded the country, CCEP and other groups wrote editorials and testified in Congress about their negative impact on the great majority of child care workers who were dedicated and undervalued.

Accomplishments notwithstanding, the movement suffered from certain weaknesses. First and foremost, it was hampered by woefully inadequate financial resources. Because it was outside the mainstream of early childhood groups, there was limited support available from charitable organizations. With the exception of the San Francisco-based Rosenberg Foundation, an early supporter of CCEP, philanthropic funding was scarce, and because the child care compensation issue had not yet been embraced by a larger progressive community, foundation dollars would not be forthcoming for several more years. Union resources provided some support for child care activism in Boston, Madison and northern California, but it was always tight. This was literally a "bake sale" movement, although the most common goods sold were buttons, bumper stickers, and t-shirts with such slogans as "Give a Child Care Worker a Break" and "Rights, Raises, Respect." Individual donations and memberships provided some support, but given the limited resources of the core constituency, there was resistance to charging more than a nominal fee, if any, for most services.

The composition of these groups was also problematic, in terms of building a movement that would represent the child care workforce as a whole. Most of these early leaders were white, under 35 and college-educated, at a time when women of color and workers with fewer years of education were increasingly entering the field. As the movement matured and diversified, there was a gap between the demographics of the founding leaders and many of their constituents. Further, the roots of the movement lay in the center-based sector of the child care industry, and with the exception of Ann Arbor, none of the early groups anticipated the tremendous shift toward home-based care in the coming decade. All would have to struggle to rethink their relationship to family child care providers, whom they often saw as business people, or as largely irrelevant to the cause, rather than as fellow child care practitioners with many common concerns. Reflecting on the disconnection between family child care and center-based workers during this time, Peggy Haack recalls, "I hardly even knew that family child care existed until I got into it myself in the early nineties."

The composition of the movement would become a growing problem as participants moved out of the classroom and away from teaching. Some groups hired teachers as staff when funding became available, and these tended not to return to the classroom. Others involved in the movement became center directors or resource and referral agency staff, or assumed other non-classroom roles, often in order to support

themselves and their families more adequately. Many of the early allies of the movement were also drawn from those who had left the classroom. Thus, while the groups represented child care teachers, they were not necessarily teacher-led. CCEP addressed this problem initially by ensuring that at least 50 percent of its board members would be teachers or providers, and often by hiring part-time staff who also worked part-time in the classroom. This issue of being representative of the workforce would call out for resolution as the movement grew.

The movement also experienced internal conflict around the issue of professionalism. On the one hand, many resisted the focus on increasing training and education without addressing the economic realities of child care work, firmly rejecting the notion that increased levels of education would automatically deliver better pay and respect. Many who had a background in the labor movement and the left felt uncomfortable with language around professionalism that they considered elitist. On the other hand, many of these teachers were well-trained in child development, believed strongly that people working with young children should receive child-related training, and did consider themselves professionals. But while the early movement did often emphasize the need for accessible, affordable training, and for keeping child care affordable for parents, activists were often unable to counter the perception that they were interested only in wages, to the exclusion of all other “professional” concerns.

The early movement was fueled by its members’ firm belief in the righteousness of their cause, as well as their experiences from the 1960s that led them to believe that they had the power to transform society. To this generation of activists who had witnessed the anti-war, civil rights and women’s movements, exposing oppression and organizing around it were seen as the most important steps toward change. This world view allowed these teachers to take on the formidable task of restructuring how society viewed the care of young children. It also meant that they underestimated their opposition, spread themselves too thin, and did not think strategically enough about organizing a power base – in part because of their emphasis on individual transformation and consciousness-raising. While they recognized the limitations of existing organizations such as labor unions and NAEYC, they did not pay enough attention to the question of organization building, once it became clear that not all child care workers would be able or willing to unionize, and that NAEYC was unlikely to reinvent itself as a teacher/provider organization.<sup>14</sup> The latter was particularly true given NAEYC’s growth in membership from other sectors of the field, including profit-making operations whose success rested largely on the low wages of teachers.

The movement was also stymied in large part by the lack of resources. To take one example, CCEP became the *de facto* national group after securing some limited funding to coordinate local efforts around the country, but its membership revenue was

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<sup>14</sup> NAEYC dues at the time were about \$30 per year, which, although relatively low for a professional organization membership, was beyond the reach of many working with children. In contrast, CCEP initially charged \$5 per year for its newsletter, but would always make it available for free. This accessible fee, however, did not cover many of CCEP’s expenses.

minimal, it never figured out how to offer services (such as health insurance) that would attract a substantially larger membership base, and it was also continuing its local education and organizing work in northern California. A continual reliance on foundation support would prove to be a very shaky foundation on which to build the lead organization in the movement.

The issue of resources was not only challenging on the organizational level. The early leaders of the movement understood the need for a large investment of public funds in child care, similar to what existed in Europe, if the needs of parents, children and workers were to be adequately addressed. But with the defeat of national child care legislation, a tight economy, and a growing critique of federal investment in human services, there was a reluctance to make a call for universal public funding the centerpiece of its strategy. A later “devolution” of funding from Washington to the states meant that local and statewide solutions would become ever more important, but as yet, there were no models for creative policy initiatives at that level of government. As Joan Lombardi notes, “In the eighties, there was still a sense [at the policy level] of not knowing what to do about wages.”<sup>15</sup>

As this first phase of the child care compensation movement drew to a close, its faced formidable internal and external challenges:

- How to build its ranks to reflect the changing child care workforce;
- How to develop a power base and an organization led by teachers and providers, given the limits of existing unions and professional organizations;
- How to legitimize the voices and needs of child care workers, and how to build better alliances, within and beyond the established child care community;
- How to articulate goals that simultaneously embraced its commitment to education and training and to higher wages;
- How to design winnable policy reforms given the diverse and under-resourced structure of the industry; and
- How to develop strategies that would draw public attention to the problems of child care workers.

## **Worthy Wages as the Key to Better Child Care: 1985-1995**

### *The Setting*

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<sup>15</sup> Although publicly funded pre-kindergarten programs had been established by this time in several states, and the movement was aware from salary studies that these programs paid higher salaries, the movement did not look to a universal pre-kindergarten program as a viable strategy in the early years. This may have been due, in part, to the fact that many of the pre-K programs operated only half day, and most of the movement activists were focused on expanding full-day services for working parents.

Tremendous changes occurred in child care during the decade spanning the late 1980s and early 1990s. Fueled by the ongoing influx of mothers with young children into the labor force, expansion in the industry gave rise to new institutions, strengthened previously ignored or weak sectors, and diversified the number and types of players in the field. Resource and referral agencies proliferated, supported by corporate as well as state dollars. For-profit child care chains mushroomed, and joined with conservatives to exert pressure on policy makers to limit standards, expand vouchers as the vehicle for subsidizing low-income families, and allow for-profit programs to access such subsidy. Child care advocates and other stakeholders once again began to organize around federal child care policy, building a broad coalition around the Act for Better Child Care (ABC), which ultimately became the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) (Cohen, 2001).

Attention also focused on family child care as never before. Activists and service agency staff began to understand the large proportion of child care that this sector provided, and grappled with how to offer training and other support services that meshed with the particular needs of home-based providers. As Arlyce Currie of Oakland-based BANANAS Child Care Resource and Referral observes:

Family child care, at least in this state, was for the most part underground. Very few people were licensed, let alone doing that kind of care in any recognized way. In order to get the supply up, because of the burgeoning need at that point, a lot of us in Resource and Referral and in the teaching institutions started focusing on family child care.

Many latched on to family child care as the best way to build the supply of services, particularly for children under the age of three. For some, the pull toward home-based care was economic, since it was seen as a cheaper vehicle than contracted centers for serving low-income families. Even as the field was adjusting to the notion that the child care workforce included both center-based and home-based providers, it was forced to encompass the notion that public dollars could also go to unlicensed care, under the mantle of “parental choice,” further expanding the conception of who constituted the child care workforce.

Awareness about child care infused society as never before during this decade. As Nancy DeProse notes, “Child care was more accepted by the eighties than it had been in the early seventies,” and this opened up new possibilities in policy and organizing. While policy discussion still focused primarily on the needs of low-income families, the renewed and broader interest in child care reflected its emergence as a middle-class phenomenon. Families across the economic spectrum were struggling to meet their child care needs, and employers of relatively affluent white-collar workers were beginning to feel more pressure around this and other work and family issues. Driving this expanded demand for child care were the loss of earning power in real wages for most American workers, soaring divorce rates, and the increasing feminization of poverty, all of which increased the number of two-parent and single-parent working families.



Research during this period also exposed widespread problems in the quality of child care for most of the nation's children, at a time when government and business leaders were finally acknowledging that child care had the potential to make a major contribution to the economic and social well-being of children and the country as a whole (Hayes, Palmer & Zaslow, 1990; Committee for Economic Development, 1991, 1993). Perhaps most importantly, starting with the release of the National Child Care Staffing Study, and followed by the Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study and the Families and Relative Care Study, research explicitly drew the link between the quality of children's experience in child care and the compensation, stability and training of their teachers and providers (Whitebook, Howes & Phillips, 1990; Helburn et al., 1995; Kontos, Howes, Shinn & Galinsky, 1995). Questions of child care financing arose, as stakeholders began to understand the consequences of a system resting on an underpaid, unstable and often untrained workforce (Alliance for Early Childhood Professionals, 1994, 1996; Hill-Scott, Grossman & Pendley, 1993).

Public policy moved in two contradictory directions during this period: on one hand, the lowest-paid sectors of the workforce expanded, making it harder to improve child care salaries, and on the other, new initiatives were developed which, while they carried the potential for improvements for many, resulted in concrete gains for relatively few. The rapid expansion of the voucher system meant that contracted programs, which traditionally had negotiated better reimbursement rates and paid higher salaries, faced major new competition from for-profit and home-based care, which was often cheaper and tended to offer substantially lower worker earnings. Vouchers also led to market rate studies that, in an under-resourced market, placed the better-paying programs and providers at a disadvantage. Nancy DeProse recalls the scene in Massachusetts:

There was less accountability as the market rates were put into place, but it has also really impacted the unionized workers' ability to get wage increases and better benefits. Once you have a market rate, reimbursements are keyed to a certain level of those rates and those at the top end (which unionized centers are) can't increase their levels.

Shannah Kurland of DARE (Direct Action for Rights and Equality), a Rhode Island group which has helped family child care providers organize for better pay and benefits, adds:

The whole concept of using a market rate in an industry that is so artificially deflated just keeps rates low. It is a stupid policy for those of us trying to improve jobs, although it is smart for the state because it keeps costs down. But for a lot of our providers, [the voucher system] has actually been driving up their pay because they are at the very bottom tier of a low market. So it is a short-term gain, but it is not a long-term solution.

Helen Blank of the Children's Defense Fund and Joan Lombardi recall a similar phenomenon:

Blank: [With the advent of vouchers], now you couldn't craft a salary

strategy that affected the whole child care system. Vouchers were a major setback in terms of being able to tackle compensation.

Lombardi: I think that that was the big policy shift that affected whether we would move forward with adequate salaries. If we had gotten the Comprehensive Child Development Act in 1971, it would have funded programs. We would have had a set number of programs, infusing them with program standards including staffing requirements. Although vouchers have given parents some flexibility, especially those who work on the weekends and at night, and that's very important, on the salary side they have become part of the challenge.

During this same period, the two largest federally-supported early care and education systems demonstrated that public dollars could be used to dramatically improve salaries and reward professional development for child care teachers and providers. The 1990 Head Start Expansion and Quality Improvement Act, later renewed, led to the allocation of some \$470 million in salary increases for approximately 100,000 Head Start personnel – an average per-employee increase of about \$1,500 per year from 1991 through 1994. In Military Child Care, the Caregiver Personnel Pay Plan launched in 1989 created an ongoing system-wide program linking training with increased compensation. As Helen Blank recalls:

With the Head Start reauthorization in 1989, we were able to put in the quality and salary set-aside provisions, and you had members of Congress on both sides avidly supporting it. That was another turning point, because the issue of wages in this field was now recognized in federal law.

At the same time, Joan Lombardi worked as the Washington liaison for the Child Care Employee Project, and along with other advocates, she advocated successfully to include improved compensation as a legitimate “quality enhancement activity” for states and communities to pursue with federal Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funds. The availability of this funding stimulated a variety of creative experiments and models for improving compensation at the state level across all sectors the industry, and led to new professional development opportunities for many center-based teachers and home-based providers.

In California, for example, the Child Care Employee Project, in conjunction with a local community college, led the effort to secure CCDBG funds to expand an Early Childhood Mentor Program, which provided sizeable stipends to senior teachers who provided student teaching experience to novices in the field; this has since grown from a small pilot project to a statewide, state-supported project that has reached thousands of teachers, directors and family child care providers. In North Carolina, the TEACH scholarship program also emerged during this period; this model, which also offers bonuses or stipend for participants who advance in their level of education, has now expanded to 25 states. Policy initiatives to improve salaries in Massachusetts, New York

and Canada also raised new possibilities for the movement, as discussed in the next section.

With the expansion of child care services, the ranks of the child care workforce soared. While the workforce continued to be predominantly female, the proportion of women of color caring for and educating young children increased. Public dollars, which were once the exclusive domain of better-paying nonprofit or government-operated center programs, were now diffused across all sectors of the industry, fueling the expansion not only of child care services but of lower-paying child care jobs (Tuominen, 2001). Center-based workers were still better educated than women in other parts of the child care field and in the workforce as a whole, but the first signs emerged that formal educational levels were slipping in this sector (Whitebook, Phillips & Howes, 1993). Turnover rates also began to soar, more than doubling in center-based care to nearly 40 percent per year. During this period, wages for center-based child care workers, as for many other low-wage workers, failed to keep pace with inflation (Child Care Employee Project, 1988).

### *Key Players*

From 1985 to 1995, the fledgling efforts of earlier years blossomed into a creative, identifiable movement. By demonstrating the link between low pay and poor-quality care, the widely publicized National Child Care Staffing Study (Whitebook, Howes & Phillips, 1990) drew supporters into the movement who had previously been reluctant, but now felt more comfortable talking about compensation as it related to the well-being of children. The study carried more legitimacy and drew more attention than previous research, partly because CCEP conducted it jointly with respected researchers Carollee Howes (University of California at Los Angeles) and Deborah Phillips (University of Virginia), and also because it broke new ground in linking the adult work environment with children's learning environment, exposing the relationship between low wages and the widespread problem of poor-quality care.<sup>16</sup>

Much of the transformation and growth of the movement during this period resulted from the explosion of grassroots activity embodied by the Worthy Wage Campaign, founded in 1991. During the second half of the 1980s, the original groups involved in the Child Care Employee Caucus continued to meet and strengthen their ties with each other. They also stepped up their local policy and organizing activities (see next section), and began working nationally by providing input to the ABC Coalition, focusing on gaining support for compensation efforts at the state level. At the 1989 NAEYC Conference immediately following the National Child Care Staffing Study's October release, Caucus members sensed the groundswell of energy around staffing issues that the study had ignited.

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<sup>16</sup> Several noted researchers also conducted a sub-study of parents and child care quality, which lent further credence to staffing issues and to the National Child Care Staffing Study itself (Howes et al., 1995).

Two of the active Caucus communities which were also study sites – Boston and Seattle – seized upon the phrase used by the NCCSS authors to describe the plight of child care workers: “Worthy Work, Worthless Wages.”<sup>17</sup> In the spring of 1990, Seattle’s annual child care parade took “worthy wages” as its theme, using the opportunity to publicize the study findings and to engage the public with the issue. Also that spring, Massachusetts activists launched a Campaign for Worthy Wages, organizing proactively throughout the state to fight proposed cutbacks in child care and human services funding. They kicked off the campaign by hosting four regional forums, drawing over 300 teachers and advocates. A convention of “child care workers for worthy wages” followed, aiming to empower teachers as a political force and to adopt a child care teachers’ “quality issues platform” to be used in the upcoming election campaign season. At the fall 1990 NAEYC conference, hopes were high for the compensation movement as Caucus members joined with other child care advocates to celebrate the passage of the Child Care and Development Block Grant, especially its provision allowing federal dollars to be used for compensation enhancement activities in the states.

In the spring of 1991, the Seattle community galvanized child care worker advocates around the country by combining their annual spring child care parade, entitled “Child Care on the Move for Worthy Wages,” with a one-day walkout or closure by some 75 centers for part or all of the day. The goal was to get more parents involved in demonstrating the severity of the child care staffing crisis to their employers, the government and the general public. The parade drew 1,800 teachers, parents, center directors, child care advocates and children, along with the Mayor of Seattle, and earned widespread press coverage. Following the parade, a “child care summit” took place to design policy, teacher empowerment and organizing strategies. That summer, members of the Child Care Employee Caucus began seriously discussing a coordinated national walkout or campaign, and the CCEP newsletter invited feedback on the effort.<sup>18</sup>

Meanwhile, activists became discouraged as the political process to implement CCDBG unfolded, drastically limiting the percentage of funds that states could use to upgrade child care quality. In addition, it had become clear that few states were taking advantage of the compensation provision in their quality enhancement plans. This sobering information reinforced the need for a more visible national grassroots movement, and the Child Care Employee Caucus made plans to launch a national Worthy Wage Campaign at the 1991 NAEYC Conference in Denver. The leaders made several assumptions from the outset: the Campaign would be a multi-year effort (the original plan was for five years, although the Campaign continued beyond that), and it would be defined as a public awareness campaign.

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<sup>17</sup> This slogan was coined by John Lawrence, Staff Director for Congressman George Miller (D-California).

<sup>18</sup> Planners wondered whether the Caucus or CCEP had the ability to lead such an effort, and whether a significant segment of the field would actually support it; they also worried that a walkout might pit teachers against parents and directors. In the end, these concerns led activists to decide on a multi-year public awareness campaign as the appropriate next step (CCEP News, 1991).

### Worthy Wage Campaign Principles

Whether we call ourselves child care workers, family child care providers, preschool or early childhood teachers, teacher assistants or caregivers, we are working in a field where most employees are underpaid and undervalued—a field that is continually losing its best workers because of poor wages and benefits.

The Worthy Wage Campaign is a five-year grassroots effort to empower ourselves and mobilize to reverse this child care staffing crisis. It is organized around the following three principles:

- To create a unified voice for the concerns of the early care and education workforce at the national, state and local levels;
- To increase the value and respect for those who provide early care and education through improving their wages, benefits, working conditions and training opportunities;
- To promote the accessibility and affordability of high-quality early care and education options that meet the diverse needs of children and families.

Each year the focal point of the Campaign is a nationwide Worthy Wage Day.  
(CCEP News, 1992)

The organizers flooded the conference with stickers announcing the first annual Worthy Wage Day, to be held the following April during NAEYC's annual Week of the Young Child. They also filled the convention and hotel hallways with child-size "worthy wage babies" made by the Seattle activists, holding signs with facts about the staffing crisis, the plight of child care workers, and the connection between poor jobs and poor-quality care. As conference attendees filed in for the opening keynote session, Caucus members handed out stickers and staged a mock funeral procession, carrying coffins labeled with such slogans as "Bury dead-end jobs" and "Don't let our profession die." Nearly the entire crowd applauded, stood and joined the chant, "Stand up for worthy wages."<sup>19</sup> As recounted in the Winter 1992 Child Care Employee News,

The most dramatic story thus far is surely the campaign waged by NAEYC members to gain their organization's endorsement at the annual conference. The next day (after the keynote), when NAEYC's Quality, Compensation and Affordability Committee failed to endorse the Worthy Wage Campaign, conference attendees hit the ceiling. At the Members' Expression of Opinion session on Saturday night, dozens of teachers, AEYC affiliate reps, family day care providers, and others came forward to insist that the national body take a more aggressive stand *now* on compensation issues. Seattle activists moved the crowd to cheers and a standing ovation with a dramatic reading of a story they had written about the staffing crisis.<sup>20</sup> On Sunday, as a result, the Governing Board voted

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<sup>19</sup> The tension between Caucus members and some of the NAEYC leadership became intense. The latter considered the "mock funeral" to be in extreme bad taste and asked for an apology, while Caucus members felt that such guerrilla theatre was a legitimate vehicle for drawing people to their cause. More than any other, this moment captured the generational and political differences between the two groups.

<sup>20</sup> Entitled the ABC Story, it tells the all-too-real saga of teachers leaving to become parking lot attendants, and demonstrates the negative effect on children, parents, co-workers and the director. It was written by Margie Carter and Deb Curtis of Harvest Resources in Seattle, and illustrated by Joan Newcomb. A version of it can be found in *Taking On Turnover: An Action Guide for Child Care Teachers and Directors*

unanimously to endorse the campaign and join the newly formed Worthy Wage Coalition—truly a breakthrough event that would never have occurred without the activism of so many NAEYC members.

A Worthy Wage Coalition Steering Committee was established with representatives from national organizations and local groups that supported the campaign. Among the Campaign endorsers, besides NAEYC, were the Children’s Defense Fund, the Child Care Action Campaign, the National Association for Family Day Care, the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, and many statewide and regional AEYC affiliates, unions, and other women’s and economic justice groups. Following the conference, Worthy Wage Campaign groups sprang up in at least 30 states and well over 100 communities. Some were comprised of no more than a few teachers and providers, but everyone was electrified by the idea of a national movement. On the first Worthy Wage Day, parades, walkouts and demonstrations in cities across the country culminated in a CBS Evening News report, featuring Dan Rather telling a Worthy Wage joke: “Why did the child care worker cross the road? To get to her second job.”

The ability of the Caucus to launch an effort with so much energy and resonance in the child care community, and to leverage so much national publicity, surprised not only the leaders of mainstream child care organizations but the Caucus members themselves. While some in the child care field were displeased by the organizers’ style, the Campaign’s creativity and passion could not be ignored. As Helen Blank recalls, “The Worthy Wage movement underscored that compensation and teacher qualification issues are the core of what happens to children in child care.”

Several other notable shifts in the composition of the movement occurred during this time. First, it drew a new generation of activists. Many Worthy Wagers, particularly in Seattle and California, were in their twenties, while the Caucus leaders were now in their late thirties and early forties, and were considered, much to their surprise, to be the “mothers” or even the “grandmothers” of the movement. Many of the younger participants were teachers, while many of the leaders were directors or held other non-teaching positions. Barb Wiley, one of the self-described “nineties kids,” recalls:

When I entered the scene, the National Child Care Staffing Study had just come out. The annual parades were looking more like rallies, and the rallying cry was around the low wages in the field. There was a growing contingent of teachers taking leadership on the issue. Most of the leadership up to that point had been white directors from North End centers that served middle- to upper-income families, and that was

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(Whitebook & Bellm, 1999). The Seattle campaign, and Margie Carter and Deb Curtis in particular, continued to develop many creative public displays, props and videos to draw people into the movement (Carter & Curtis, 1993, 1996, 1997).

reflected in the Worthy Wage Days and the movement here. That is starting to change, and LEAP has been an important factor in that.<sup>21</sup>

The movement grew more diverse in other ways as well. Many more family child care providers became involved, although the movement was still primarily composed of center-based teachers. Founding Caucus member Peggy Haack switched from center care to family child care during this period, and played an important role in legitimizing the Worthy Wage Campaign among family child care providers and bringing their concerns to the Campaign's attention. More women of color also joined the movement in this period, although in many communities it remained predominantly European American. Local groups made concerted efforts to examine their own biases and exclusivity, and to make changes that were more welcoming not just to women of color, but also people from a broader range of cultural and political orientations. By the mid-1990s, no longer did all compensation activists identify as sixties progressives, or even as feminists. Many also did not belong to or interface with the mainstream early childhood organizations.

New groups emerged on the scene with very different histories and backgrounds. The clearest example was DARE (Direct Action for Rights and Equality), a grassroots economic and racial justice organization in Rhode Island which became involved in representing low-income women of color who provided home-based child care for state-subsidized families. DARE, and an affiliated group which later became the Daycare Justice Coalition, emerged as a powerful model of activism in the compensation movement, organizing for tangible changes in state child care policies, winning more reliable payment schedules, and initiating a fight for state-funded health coverage for teachers and providers which they won in 1997 (DARE, 1998). DARE organizer Shannah Kurland tells of these experiences:

In 1990, when we started at DARE, some people had been doing family child care for 20 and 30 years already. So it had been around for a while, but it was kept hidden, marginal, completely cut off from the mainstream child care establishment. There was a family child care association in our state, and I know there are various organizations nationally, but they had no connection with the folks we represented and the association did not look at [family child care] as a worker issue. We had to create a playing field because there wasn't one. Locally, the industry was pretty much dominated by the director association and the local AEYC chapter. Nationally, we were searching for anybody that even hinted that they might have something to do with organizing child care workers. We were practically jumping on them saying, great, can we compare notes on how you do it? When we heard about CCEP, we thought, O.K., at least there

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<sup>21</sup> LEAP (the Leadership Empowerment Action Project) is a training effort developed by the Worthy Wage Campaign in the early 1990s and used today in many communities. Offered in a variety of formats, from weekend workshops to semester-length college courses, LEAP training focuses on helping teachers and providers to develop a political understanding of the issues affecting their jobs and to increase their skills as organizers and leaders, with particular attention to building diversity in the movement.

are some other people in child care who are looking at compensation issues, and that was a big plus. As the nineties evolved, I saw some changes in terms of the presence of not just family child care providers, but in particular, women of color doing family child care. It shifted the mix within the child care compensation movement.

Definitely, not coming at it from a child care background made a difference. Our framework to look at the issue was one of racial, economic and gender justice (in that order), while the other players didn't generally express an ideology or set of values other than references to quality child care. That meant that DARE members often had some substantive differences, such as being more likely to want better policies for the parents, too, or being suspicious of the licensing agency (since their behavior as the child welfare agency makes them famous for institutional racism). Our providers themselves have been pretty isolated and marginalized from those who run things and shape things in the industry.

Other child care advocates, even those who did not necessarily embrace the teacher/provider empowerment philosophy of the Worthy Wage Campaign or its focus on compensation, began to pay greater attention to staffing issues during this period. Many within NAEYC, and others associated with the Wheelock College Center for Career Development, Pacific Oaks College and other academic and government institutions, put their energies into building the infrastructure of a professional development system in early care and education. In some cases, these efforts included mechanisms to improve compensation or to reduce the financial burden on child care teachers and providers pursuing training; in other cases, they did not. In contrast to the Worthy Wage Campaign, these efforts typically did not emerge from a grassroots effort, but rather were initiated and led by trainers, directors, or those with close ties to local or state government. As detailed below in the discussion of the years 1995-2001, such players have been drawn increasingly to compensation issues and constitute a new wing of the movement.

Besides expanding and shifting in composition between 1985 and 1995, the movement also established or strengthened connections with other movements. In part because the Worthy Wage Campaign became so visible in the early 1990s, other groups began to notice compensation activists and seek them out. While few new labor movement partners came onto the scene during this time, as described below, the unions representing child care workers tested new strategies, and were inspired by successes in Canada where an organized child care workforce made significant policy gains. As concern about work/family issues received more attention in the labor movement, awareness grew of the interlocking problems of underpaid child care workers and poor-quality, unaffordable child care for union members. Women's organizations began stepping back into the child care arena, and progressive funders began to notice and support the child care compensation movement.



Within the early care and education field, compensation advocates took several steps from the outskirts to the center of activity. CCEP, as a representative of the Child Care Employee Caucus, managed for the first time to secure a seat at the table of national organizations discussing child care policy, assisted in large measure by the presence of Joan Lombardi, who was to become the first head of the federal Child Care Bureau, as Washington Liaison. But child care staffing issues often remained ignored whenever CCEP staff weren't present, and were sometimes dismissed even when they were, as being impossible to address. Helen Blank notes:

I remember the press conference for the National Child Care Staffing Study in '89 that got the issue going. I also remember long discussions on salaries for the ABC bill. We found out that Canada was doing something tangible, but . . . part of our coalition said, "We want to do something, but you're asking us to do something that will cost billions of dollars. This is just going to kill us. We can't do it."

Toward the end of this period, in 1994, the Child Care Employee Project underwent a major transformation by formally becoming a national organization, moving its offices from Oakland, California to Washington, D.C. under the name of the National Center for the Early Childhood Workforce, or NCECW. (It became the Center for the Child Care Workforce, or CCW, in 1997.) Although it had never been a mass membership organization, it had become the *de facto* representative of the loose coalition of local Worthy Wage Campaigns and of other individuals committed to the compensation movement. By becoming a Washington-based organization, and by attracting Claudia Wayne, former Director of the National Committee on Pay Equity and Associate Director of Women's Affairs at AFSCME, as its Executive Director, the new incarnation of CCEP symbolized a broadening and maturing of the compensation movement.

### *Primary Assumptions and Key Strategies*

At this stage, the movement's energy was focused on getting the compensation issue onto the mainstream child care agenda. Activists recognized that the responsibility for this task rested in their hands for a number of reasons. Although child care increasingly captured the attention of policy makers, business leaders and other stakeholders outside the field, the leadership of the major child care organizations could not be counted on to raise the issue of wages, which still ranked lower on their list of concerns than quality, affordability and supply.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, the workforce itself was overwhelmingly unorganized, typically apathetic, and largely protesting low pay by "voting with their feet," walking out of child care employment toward more lucrative

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<sup>22</sup> This included NAEYC, the Children's Defense Fund, the Child Care Action Campaign, and the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, among others. Another approach to the history of this movement could involve a survey of the public position statements of the leading child care organization with respect to compensation issues during these years, as well as interviews with their past and present leadership, to elicit their assessment of the child care compensation movement.

occupations. This fledgling movement thus faced a formidable task: trying to raise awareness among consumers and the general public while simultaneously galvanizing the field, both leaders and rank-and-file, to speak out and act on their own behalf.

Recognizing that no single strategy would be likely to deliver the goods, activists continued to pursue several strategies at once. Although this also drained energy and often spread meager resources too thin, the various approaches helped to bolster and strengthen one another. Releasing the National Child Care Staffing Study to the general public, for example, helped to draw attention from the mainstream press and policy makers, which in turn, put many of the more reluctant leaders of the child care field “on notice” with respect to staffing issues. Similarly, the Worthy Wage Campaign both gave those within the field a vehicle to engage around pay issues, and helped to raise public awareness, particularly exposing the need for a better-financed system for parents. The Worthy Wage jingle, “Parents can’t afford to pay, teachers and providers can’t afford to stay, “ was a shorthand tutorial in the inefficient economics of child care.

Four major strategies were dominant during this phase of the movement: documentation or research, public policy, community organizing, and public awareness activities. The latter ran as a thread through all the other efforts, with activists using the media and a variety of public events to draw attention to their issues. Documenting the conditions of child care workers, and linking them to children’s development and the quality of care, proved to be pivotal for the movement. Gwen Morgan recalled, “The data was carefully crafted, and it has been invaluable in increasing the awareness of what the issues are.” Deborah Phillips, a developmental psychologist currently at Georgetown University and one of the principal investigators for the National Child Care Staffing Study, recounts that through her association with the Child Care Employee Project,

I became sensitized to the fact that the women who provide child care are people in their own right who need to be studied. And to the fact that the adult work environment of child care is absolutely essential to the child’s development. But people in my field had really not been studying child care in that way. [The National Child Care Staffing Study] was the first official documentation of how lousy things are out there, even restricting ourselves to the center-based market. This was the first time we were able to link the adult work environment, specifically turnover, salaries and benefits, to child development outcomes. So in terms of the intellectual history of the field, that was actually a huge leap.

Because this strand of research did not emerge from within academia, but rather was field- or movement-driven, it was understood from the outset that its ultimate potential to influence the child care discourse lay with a creative, bold dissemination strategy. While adhering to rigorous standards for conducting research, the researchers also understood that the study’s major value would be as a public awareness tool. CCEP – and later, other worker-based groups engaging in action research – recognized that they were vulnerable to criticisms of bias and

had to be above reproach, always selecting highly respected research partners and subjecting their studies to rigorous review.<sup>23</sup>

The pursuit of local public policy initiatives blossomed as a strategy during this period, proceeding according to different timetables in different states, depending on their socioeconomic and political circumstances. When unionized child care workers in Toronto, Canada won substantial pay increases from the Ontario provincial government, their victory inspired union activists in Massachusetts, who in coalition with other early childhood and labor groups won over \$4 million in state salary enhancement funds in 1986 (and in the next two years) for workers in subsidized centers and Head Start. They also gained “affordability funds” to ensure that the increased costs of better pay would not be passed on to low-income families using child care services.<sup>24</sup>

A variety of strategies were explored in other states during this period, with varying degrees of success. In 1987, the Minneapolis-based Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals (formerly the Child Care Workers’ Alliance), which had worked for eight years on various public awareness and research efforts, decided to refocus its compensation efforts toward systematic change of the Minnesota child care delivery system. In 1991, the Alliance released a pay equity report (AECP, 1991) that led to increased wages in school-age child care programs in public schools; it organized a series of statewide Economic Summits, beginning in 1994 (AECP, 1994); it spearheaded a task force to increase reimbursement rates to child care programs; and it continues to take national leadership on developing financing models for a fully-funded, affordable child care system (AECP, 1996, 1998).

In California, advocates won “whistle-blowing” protection for child care workers who reported licensing abuses in their programs, secured public dollars for a college loan assumption program for teachers and providers, and for the Early Childhood Mentor Program, and won cost-of-living increases for teachers in state-funded centers, partly as a result of their “play dough” campaign. (Several hundred teachers mixed an enormous batch of play dough on the Capitol steps in Sacramento, and delivered it to legislators with the message, “We need real dough.”) In New York, advocates won \$12 million in

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<sup>23</sup> In addition to the National Child Care Staffing Study and the other major studies (Helburn, 1995; Galinsky et al., 1995), a number of local community workforce studies were conducted during this decade. CCEP published a booklet for activists and researchers outlining the methodological issues in the study of the center-based workforce, as well as dissemination strategies to ensure that data would bolster local efforts to improve conditions for child care workers (Whitebook & Bellm, 1995). During this period, Kathy Modigliani, working first in Ann Arbor and later through Wheelock College, also developed an instrument with strategies for collecting and analyzing data on family child care providers (Modigliani, Helburn, Morris & Culkin, 1994).

<sup>24</sup> According to longtime compensation advocate and center program director Bob French, based in Massachusetts, “A strong state economy, coupled with extremely low unemployment, raised the administration’s concern that a child care teacher shortage would constrict the capacity of the state child care delivery system and thereby undercut the Governor’s welfare reform programs. While advocates saw salary upgrading as a moral victory in which we persuaded politicians to do the right thing, Governor Dukakis supported salary upgrading mainly to ensure the availability of child care to help carry out his welfare reform plan.”

statewide salary enhancements, but the state program lasted little over a year, undercutting its effectiveness. Nassau County, N.Y., however, began a salary enhancement program in the late 1980s that is still in operation. In New York City, AFSCME was able to gain parity with public school teachers for child care workers with equivalent education. In North Carolina, the TEACH scholarship program began in the early 1990s, and Minnesota advocates pursued the strategy of differential public reimbursement rates for child care programs paying higher salaries, and articulating standards for working conditions, benefits and pay for child care workers.

On the federal front, in addition to advocacy around the Child Care and Development Block Grant, advocates won salary enhancement provisions in the 1990 Head Start reauthorization. The Military Caregiver Personnel Pay Plan – while not the result of grassroots advocacy, but rather created by M.A. Lucas and other administrators within the Department of Defense – also inspired many advocates at this time, as did the election of Bill Clinton to the presidency, which offered promise of greater federal involvement in improving child care policy. Increasingly, CCEP carried the message about child care workers to Congressional staff, with a series of briefings on the National Child Care Staffing Study and on the impact of various proposals on child care workers and program quality. In 1993, CCEP received funding from Carnegie Corporation of New York to launch the Compensation Initiatives Project, which focused on developing a more visible presence in Washington, convening those interested in child care policy to discuss strategies, and producing a national newsletter on compensation-related policy developments.

There was little substantive debate about compensation enhancement strategies at this point, although the one-year span of the New York program did alert advocates to the pitfalls of short-term funding. There was also recognition of the trade-offs involved in winning increases for only certain members of the workforce – typically public-sector workers, because their wages were linked more directly to policies that could be influenced. Yet throughout this period, any attempt to achieve a policy change, no matter how temporary or small, helped to chip away at the widespread belief that the compensation problem was simply too large to address.

As noted earlier, community and union organizing efforts increased both in type and number during this phase of the movement. As the Worthy Wage Campaign drew greater numbers and more visibility, several union organizing efforts also expanded or developed, with varying degrees of success. Massachusetts activists, who had been organizing one center at a time until the mid-1980s, largely in the Boston area, were able to bring hundreds more workers into the UAW's newly-created Day Care and Human Services Local by mounting a statewide campaign. In northern California, District 65, UAW launched a multi-year organizing drive for child care teachers in two of the large for-profit chains, La Petite Academy and Kinder Care; in large part, the drive failed because of union-busting efforts by the companies and very high worker turnover. Child care workers in Wisconsin and Minnesota also engaged in organizing, but found it difficult to develop a relationship with a union that would be a satisfactory match for very many workers: As Peggy Haack recalls:

In Madison, the union went from being UAW [during the years 1984-1989] to being independent, because members felt they were not getting the support that they needed. [They affiliated with AFSCME Council 40 in 1999, but even after all these years of effort, only seven Madison centers are unionized.) As Nancy DeProsse said, there were certain programs where winning a union contract just was not an option, and they didn't see another way to go. There was a need for another place for people to stay active and "in the loop," and that was the Worthy Wage Campaign.

The fit between traditional organizing approaches and the child care industry was complicated by the particular structure and sensibilities of this workforce. Diversity of workers and settings, complicated funding streams, and high turnover – in addition to anti-unionism – all worked heavily against collective bargaining approaches, with few exceptions. Further, there was a strong desire among many child care teachers to have an organizational home that was part of their own community; they were less likely to join a union with "auto workers" in its name, for example, than an organization created by and for child care workers. Therein lay much of the attraction of the Worthy Wage Campaign.

At least initially, the Worthy Wage Campaign served as the vehicle to draw anyone who wanted to improve child care jobs, regardless of the setting in which they worked, and thus it was able to engage people in the movement in a much less labor-intensive way than traditional union organizing. The initiators of the Campaign were intentional about swelling the ranks of the movement, but also understood the limitations of such an informal configuration in terms of staying power, the ability to deliver concrete gains and protections to workers on the job, and the absence of the labor movement's kind of clout. As such, some early organizers viewed the Campaign as a "pre-union" formation, but with the exception of Seattle and Philadelphia, as described in the following section, a next phase of organizing failed to materialize.

The Worthy Wage Campaign drew more heavily on the women's movement and community organizing strategies than on the traditional union model, with respect to its focus on helping child care teachers and providers find their voices and become advocates on their own behalf. Even prior to the Worthy Wage Campaign, many local groups had been engaging in such empowerment and community-building work. In Seattle and the San Francisco Bay Area, advocacy and leadership training for child care teachers and providers began in the mid-1980s. Community events such as the Seattle parades, an annual child care workers' day in Madison and in Minneapolis, and a series of mid-1980s events in Berkeley called "In Praise of Providers," all were geared to appreciating and politicizing child care teachers and providers. This approach was "culturally consistent" with the ethos of how teachers and providers were accustomed to treating children and families in their programs.

### *Accomplishments, Missteps and Challenges*

To the extent that the compensation movement, particularly the Worthy Wage Campaign, sought to raise public awareness and put the issue of wages on the nation's child care agenda, it made great strides during this period. Yet resistance to talking about the wage issue persisted within the major child care organizations and among many who worked on a daily basis with young children, as Claudia Wayne recounts:

When I came to [the Center for the Child Care Workforce, then NCECW] in 1994, I saw that many of the national leaders in the field still felt that it was unprofessional to talk about wages. Earlier, too, I think the situation was similar in other fields such as nursing. You were only to talk about the children, and not about yourself or your wage, and it's really only in the last couple of years that this has shifted a lot.

Still, a profound change had occurred; the silence about the compensation problem was permanently shattered. The phrase “worthy wages” was appropriated into the vocabulary throughout the field, and some field leaders sought to showcase their support of better compensation. Some NAEYC Governing Board candidates, for example, began actively seeking endorsements from the Child Care Employee Caucus (now the Worthy Wage Caucus) and the Campaign. In the early years, the boldness of compensation activists stood out above all else, but in this period, their skill and creativity in advancing the discussion came more to the fore, as they linked pay to the quality of services, attracted much more media attention, and built public awareness of the issue. It was becoming clear that, despite any lingering resistance to the “worthy wage” message, shining a spotlight on the staffing crisis was also highlighting the larger need for a fully-funded, improved system of child care in the United States. Advocates began in this period to be less sheepish about stating the true costs of quality child care, publicly challenging the notion of good, cheap services, but stopping short of a call for publicly-funded universal pre-kindergarten or child care.

But if wages were on the agenda, teachers and providers, more often than not, still did not have “a seat at the table” when child care policy decisions were made. The Caucus began running NAEYC Board candidates in the mid-1980's (Jim Morin and Walter Draude being the first teachers ever elected to this governing body), and CCEP staff began to be invited to represent child care workers at national meetings, but often this inclusion of teachers and providers, or CCEP members, was a token effort. This was less true at the local level in communities with active Worthy Wage groups or unions. Most of the local Campaign groups that formed the original Employee Caucus held dear the priority of empowering teachers and providers as their organizational leaders, and dedicated a substantial portion of their meager resources to that end. But even as the wage issue was embraced by many in the field, there was seldom an understanding or acceptance of the principle that teachers and providers should be empowered as leaders in their own right. This resulted in continued discontent among Caucus and Campaign members that was often misunderstood by others who identified as “worthy wage” supporters. Peggy Haack captures this conflict in one story:

I believe that our efforts over the past 20 years, whether organizing in our communities to build public awareness and get teachers and providers invested in change, or organizing unions, have in some way shaped all the policy interventions, yet the initiatives in themselves don't necessarily galvanize organizing efforts. Whether they do or not, I think, depends on whether the child care workforce itself was truly engaged as stakeholders in the planning and implementation of any given initiative. I recall a statement that was relayed to me that accentuates this point: "We gave them TEACH [a scholarship program]. What more do you want?"

The issue of professionalism was another unresolved subject, both between the Campaign and the field as a whole, and within the Campaign itself. The conflict or tension ran in two directions. On the one hand, by focusing on wages, the movement was always on the defensive about the importance of formal education and specialized, college-level training. Although movement leaders were often highly-educated and well-trained themselves, and despite the fact that the National Child Care Staffing Study, so heavily promoted by the Campaign, documented the interrelationship of formal education, specialized training, pay and quality, the Campaign was frequently pigeonholed as caring only about wages. In part, the tension revolved around strategy. Many of the more established field leaders, such as NAEYC and Wheelock College's Center for Career Development, favored quality enhancement initiatives, such as program accreditation or the creation of professional development systems, that more often than not ignored compensation. Movement activists were actively promoting strategies that linked compensation and training, but whenever they criticized plans to spend more and more dollars on training with no attention to financial reward, or to improve centers' quality without addressing pay issues, they tended to be painted into the corner of "only wanting money."

On the other hand, as the movement diversified to include new teachers and providers, many of whom had completed less formal education and child-related training, and/or approached the issue from an economic justice orientation, there was new criticism within the movement of linking compensation and training, and particularly of any emphasis on financial reward for attaining college degrees. People were not opposed to education and training per se, but felt that new requirements would discount the experience of many seasoned teachers and providers, and ran the danger of displacing people who had less access to formal educational experiences because of their cultural and class backgrounds. Since many of the first wave of movement activists also believed in a living wage for all workers, and were trying to build a representative, diverse movement, they found it difficult to negotiate the conflict. At one Worthy Wage retreat during this time, there was serious debate over whether all teachers, or only those with advanced training, should receive the base salary of \$10.00 an hour recommended by the Campaign. Some of those with more training were insulted by the notion of less-experienced or less-trained colleagues earning the same pay, while others felt that *all* should earn a basic self-sufficiency wage before some were rewarded for their education. Such debates broke down along racial and class lines to some extent, but also reflected differences among sectors of the industry (family child care versus centers), stringency of

regulations in different states, and pathways through which people had entered the field. The Campaign did articulate recommendations about accessible training as one of its core demands, but left unresolved the strategic question of whether the ultimate way to raise wages was to establish more rigorous staffing standards. This inability to tolerate much internal conflict squelched other strategic debates about whether child care workers' compensation should be tied to public education salaries, and if so, what such a move implied for education and training.<sup>25</sup>

While the emergence of the Worthy Wage Campaign might be called the strength of this period, therein also lay a serious weakness in the movement. The Campaign succeeded at drawing people into its ranks, but it did not create an organizational structure with enough membership and activism to solidify its strength into an ongoing power base. In part, the founders were taken by surprise by the proliferation of local campaign groups, and did not have a strategy or plan to unify and mobilize them. In part, this is because they had founded the Campaign as a five-year effort, not as a lasting organization or institution. Many compensation activists believed that NAEYC should incorporate this issue into their work; as an organization of 100,000 or more members, it appeared to be the logical group for moving the cause forward.<sup>26</sup> Other Caucus activists saw a union as the ultimate vehicle for representing the child care workforce, but it was difficult to envision how this might happen, since several unions rather than a single one were already representing child care workers, and since considerable anti-unionism persisted in the child care workforce.<sup>27</sup>

The question of organizational structure surfaced again and again, most typically at the annual Caucus meetings at NAEYC and during summer Worthy Wage Campaign

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<sup>25</sup> Bob French notes that “in the past twenty years of public policy advocacy work in Massachusetts, we have failed to sustain wage and salary gains under the rubric of child care. Notwithstanding the wide variations in pay scales across the country, across states, and even between adjacent municipalities, public school salary scales look like a system and thereby offer a standard to shoot for – a sort of moving target. Secondly, there is a compelling case to define “early education and care” as part of the educational continuum (as we hopefully join in the educational reform efforts to re-create education).

<sup>26</sup> As the Worthy Wage Campaign drew more NAEYC members, the contingent of people who believed that NAEYC should “take on the issue” became stronger. Local affiliates achieved considerable success in engaging in Worthy Wage activities, but since NAEYC developed its Quality, Compensation and Affordability (QCA) groups at around the same time, some affiliates chose to funnel wage-related activity into QCA, others referred to their work as Worthy Wages, and some maintained a separate but often collaborative relationship with a free-standing Worthy Wage campaign. The Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA) and the Delaware Valley (Philadelphia area) AEYC were among the most successful at melding AEYC and Worthy Wage identities. Fleeting discussions about organizing the state affiliates, and then pressuring the national organization to take more action, were dampened by the limits of NAEYC’s governance structure, in which all leaders are elected at large, and internal conflict about whether NAEYC should be an advocacy organization at all. Few in the Campaign were willing to fight a governance battle within NAEYC.

<sup>27</sup> In the early 1990s, when the UAW was active in child care organizing in Massachusetts, California, Wisconsin and Illinois, there was talk of a coordinated multi-state drive, but other demands on the union’s resources kept this from occurring.



retreats hosted each year by different communities.<sup>28</sup> As the Campaign grew, Caucus members struggled with how to harness its energy and build an effective and responsive container for it. A coalition was formed of organizations that had joined the Campaign, but there was confusion about types of organizational memberships and what to do about individual members. Should there be a distinction, for example, among large established groups such as the Children’s Defense Fund or NAEYC that had endorsed the Campaign, and local Worthy Wage formations, and AEYC affiliates or child care centers engaging in Worthy Wage activities, that wanted to be counted in the Coalition? Some individuals who were not active in their local communities wanted to join the national arm of the Campaign, but local campaigns wanted these individuals to join their own ranks. Further complicating the situation was the old Child Care Employee Project organizational and individual membership structure that had developed over the years, drawing members mostly from California but also nationally as it assumed a coordinating role in the Campaign. Uneven access to resources also fueled the discussions, as some members drawn to the Campaign were capable of contributing \$50-\$100 a year or more, while others considered this beyond their means. The Caucus, the Coalition and the Board of CCEP (later CCW) returned to these issues again and again, without settling on a solution that worked well for everyone or for any length of time.

Questions of governance of the Campaign also surfaced. Who made decisions for the Campaign: CCEP? the Caucus? the Coalition? For the most part, there was a high degree of consensus that allowed this issue to remain unresolved, but it occasionally emerged. A Campaign Steering Committee was formed, and for a couple of years held regular conference calls for decision-making, but it was not necessarily representative of the membership as a whole, and there was concern that the national groups would dominate the decision-making. Eventually, the national groups became less engaged in the Steering Committee, and it became more representative of the local campaign groups. But questions remained about the direct representation of teachers and providers, the role of directors and others concerned about worthy wage issues, and the question of leadership. Although the Steering Committee and CCEP carefully stated that the Campaign did not “belong to” CCEP, which was meant to hold only a coordinating role, this distinction was not always clear within or beyond the Campaign.

The CCEP Board grappled with this dilemma prior to relocating to Washington, D.C., in 1994, seriously considering whether to become a national membership organization or a union. Both options appeared unfeasible at the time of the move. CCEP and the movement were trying to build relationships with the unions, several of

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<sup>28</sup> The annual retreats, now transformed into the CCW Summer Leadership Institute, have been the vehicle for the most sustained discussion of these questions and the main opportunity for campaign members in different parts of the country to learn from one another face-to-face. It has been suggested that these organizational questions were particularly daunting to the leaders of the campaign who, to some extent on principle, were wary of becoming “institutional.” Many had experiences in collectives and other small, personal groupings, and were not particularly knowledgeable or savvy about larger organizational structures. Union structure, considered by many to be too rigid and hierarchical, served as a negative model, as did NAEYC, which was viewed as unrepresentative and undemocratic. Early childhood culture reinforced the focus on individual well-being, providing little guidance about group structure for adults.

which had representatives on the CCEP Board, and there was little support at that time for creating a new union, or for discussing affiliate memberships or other strategies that are under consideration in the labor movement today. With respect to a professional organization, there was obvious value to continuing an outsider strategy in NAEYC, and some members of the Campaign or Board were still convinced that NAEYC would eventually take leadership on compensation issues. With respect to either a union or a membership organization, there was simply not the necessary funding to pursue either approach, nor was there likely to be.

By transitioning to Washington as the National Center for the Early Childhood Workforce (NCECW), and later as the Center for the Child Care Workforce (CCW), CCEP solidified its role as the identifiable voice of the movement. But within the movement itself, its role was less clear. On the one hand, it was the only national organization focused solely around compensation issues for this workforce; it coordinated the Worthy Wage Campaign; and it served as an information clearinghouse for local campaigns, unions, other national and professional organizations, policy makers and the media. On the other hand, it was not truly a membership organization with a democratically elected leadership, nor could it represent child care workers on the job as a union would. Further, the boundaries or distinctions between the organization and the movement became increasingly murky. Local groups looked to CCW to provide services and to represent them, but also often perceived CCW as resource-rich and as not doing enough to assist their community efforts. While it was definitely better resourced than the local campaigns, CCW faced continual financial struggles, with its survival on the line several times even amidst all its success. Because of the central value it placed on teacher and provider empowerment, the organization sought as best it could to underwrite and support grassroots activities, but found it much easier to attract financial resources for its public policy and research activities.

Initially, focusing the Worthy Wage Campaign on public awareness helped to draw many supporters. Given the diversity of opinion within the child care community, the Campaign might have been less successful had it led off with very specific objectives and strategies. But to the extent that its demands were general, criticism and impatience ensued, much of it directed toward CCEP. In trying to maintain the coalition of groups in the Campaign, and in deference to its role as coordinator, CCEP tended to share information about many strategies and options but not to direct the Campaign per se. Also, since it was not a labor organization from a legal perspective, CCEP was vulnerable to charges of price fixing for even recommending a \$10.00 base wage in the field, let alone trying to spearhead a walkout or strike. With respect to policy approaches, the movement had cast a wide net, hoping to address child care workers in all sectors, but in reality, it was much easier to conceptualize programs that would reach workers in publicly-funded settings. As with the issue of “professionalizing” the child care field, the movement sought to include everyone – or perhaps, more accurately, was reluctant to exclude anyone – and as a result, had a hard time prioritizing its strategies. The value it placed on inclusiveness and differing points of view – so important to success when working with children and families, and when building grassroots movements – had less

currency in the realm where decisions about policy and resources were made, and where leaders needed ideas about what to do.

Many in the movement understood how the structural constraints of the child care delivery system impeded true progress toward better compensation in the policy and organizing arenas. This realization did not dampen their efforts, which persisted with enormous energy and enthusiasm, but did perhaps lead the movement to be somewhat internally focused and inclined to emphasize the uniqueness of their struggle. This, in turn, isolated the movement from other groups with related struggles, and reinforced a sense that there was no right solution or that it was theirs alone to generate, which of course carried its own consequences.

As this period drew to a close, the movement continued to face formidable external and internal challenges, many of which carried over from its initial phase. These included:

- How to organize and harness the energy generated by the Worthy Wage Campaign into a solid power base and a sustainable organizational voice for child care teachers and providers, given the limits of existing unions and professional organizations;
- How to continue to expand its ranks to reflect the rapidly changing composition of the child care workforce;
- How to support local organizing while simultaneously establishing a national presence among organizations in the broader child care community;
- How to articulate goals that simultaneously embraced its commitment to education, training and higher wages, and to improving child care jobs and services; and
- How to design winnable policy reforms given the diverse and under-resourced structure of the industry.

## **The Compensation Issue Goes Mainstream: 1995-2001**

### *The Setting*

Economic and political forces beyond the child care field have dramatically increased receptivity to the compensation movement since 1995. A soaring demand for child care, resulting from the 1996 passage of national “welfare reform” legislation, necessarily focused attention on who might provide services for the many children whose mothers were now required to enter the labor force. Some states and communities looked to these mothers to become child care workers themselves, but a heightened social awareness around low-wage jobs, brought on by welfare reform itself, tended to dampen enthusiasm for such schemes, since most child care jobs offer meager hope for economic advancement or self-sufficiency. Deborah Stone, a journalist who focuses on issues relating to women and employment, reflected:

That's how policymakers look at it; lack of child care is an obstacle to women getting off the welfare rolls. And that awareness has also raised the visibility of the problem of the cost of child care – that as low as pay is in child care, the cost is often still too high for very low-income women to afford. And I think that has brought this clash to the fore. . . .many women who are child care providers end up qualifying for welfare themselves because the compensation is so low.

In reality, massive increases in child care funding resulting from the new welfare law – in a program now called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, or TANF – did greatly expand the number of family members and friends of former welfare recipients who received public dollars to care for children. In most states, the “informal” or license-exempt child care market quickly became a larger proportion of the industry, further diversifying the existing child care workforce with respect to ethnicity, language, formal education and occupational identity (Whitebook & Phillips, 1999).

A few states have managed to use new funds to build the regulated system or to support salary enhancement strategies, as in Washington and Wisconsin (Whitebook & Eichberg, 2002). Mary Tuominen, a sociologist who studies child care workers, notes:

It's the other side of the coin on welfare reform, but in Washington state, our Early Childhood Education Wage and Career Ladder is funded with welfare reform “savings.” We were one of the states that initially targeted child care as a desirable occupation for women coming off welfare. And the argument was made that because child care was a low-income occupation in which people were likely to go on assistance, these TANF “savings” should be used for the child care wage enhancement. There are certainly elements of robbing Peter to pay Paul, but it has been a resource that has enabled us to move ahead with implementing some of these [compensation] strategies.

Adding to the pressures caused by welfare reform were the moves by many states to reduce class size in elementary schools and to expand state-funded pre-kindergarten programs. These policies, in combination with an economic boom in most sectors of the economy, led to severe shortages of teachers in many community-based child care centers, since newly-created public school jobs, for example, could easily siphon off many of the most qualified child care workers by paying nearly twice the best available child care wage. Although not all pre-K programs paid as well as public schools, these positions also drew trained teachers away from other early childhood and Head Start programs. Jobs in other fields also offered more alluring financial opportunities: between 1996 and 2000, for example, nearly half the teaching staff who left a group of high-quality centers in California earned on average \$4.00 more per hour in positions unrelated to working with young children (Whitebook, Sakai, Gerber & Howes, 2001).

This exodus of many of the best-trained teachers, providers and administrators made it difficult to meet rising demand, or even to maintain existing levels of service.

Child care centers found it impossible to fully staff their classrooms, often reporting staff vacancies that lasted for months on end, and directors complained that the skill and training levels of new recruits was sinking lower and lower (Whitebook et al., 2001). Similarly, in many communities, parents' already challenging search for child care grew more difficult, and public dollars began to go unspent or contracts to be returned, all due to the effects of the staffing shortage on child care programs' capacity. As a result, many who had been lukewarm to the compensation movement or the Worthy Wage Campaign now jumped on the bandwagon to support policies that would retain and recruit people to the field (Whitebook & Eichberg, 2002). Michelle Rutherford, who heads the Child Care Division at the San Francisco Department of Human Services, and administers the Wages Plus program, offering ongoing salary supplements to center-based workers, describes the experience in her community:

This phenomenon of empty classrooms certainly was one of the things that led us to do the Wages Plus initiative, and it made the case to the policy makers that something needed to be done. In California, our requirements are high. We've got state-contracted centers that couldn't meet their standards for contracting, and there are so many of them, and their voice was loud and clear. We had been helping them expand, and the city was investing in their classrooms, and then the classrooms were standing empty because we were right in the middle of the "dot.com" surge where anybody could go get a job with benefits somewhere else.

Alongside these trends, new research on brain development focused massive public attention on the importance of the early years for children's optimal development (Shore, 1997; Carnegie Task Force, 1994), and good quality child care was also identified as essential to school readiness (Stoney & Mitchell, 2001). Media personalities and government leaders who cared about early childhood development, such as Rob Reiner and the Governors of Colorado, Georgia and North Carolina, commandeered financial resources for several new approaches to early childhood services, including provisions or initiatives that supported financial reward and more training for child care providers (Askew & Wallace, 2001). When he hosted the first White House Conference on Child Care in the fall of 1997, President Clinton highlighted the need for better training and pay as part of federal initiatives, creating a positive climate for the compensation movement, although scandals ultimately stopped any action by his administration in this realm.<sup>29</sup>

Further, interest in organizing the least organized sectors of the workforce also rose in priority for the labor movement during this period. Labor and community activists became more interested in new collaborative approaches to organizing low-wage workers, as exemplified by Living Wage Campaigns and new approaches to organizing efforts among home health care workers and janitors.

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<sup>29</sup> The Center for the Child Care Workforce was the single child care organization selected to sit on a Treasury Department Task Force established by President Clinton to explore child care policy options.

For the compensation movement, the convergence of welfare and educational reform, the economic boom and labor shortages, and the labor movement's awakening interest in child care workers, all signaled new opportunities to win reforms to improve child care pay. Many advocates took advantage of this climate by designing and advocating for new initiatives to recruit and retain teachers and providers. Many states also expanded pre-kindergarten programs, which although not an explicit strategy of the compensation movement, held out the promise in some communities of expanding the pool of better-paying work with young children. But, at the same time, it can be said that this period was one in which the inadequate, poor-quality child care system in the United States grew larger rather than better. Voucher payments limited by market rate reimbursement policies increased as a proportion of public funding, and the lion's share of public resources flowed increasingly to the least-trained and worst-paid sectors of the industry.

### *Key Players*

Responding to the rising demand for child care, the severe shortage of trained personnel, and general concern about low-wage workers, many new players entered the ring to address compensation during these years. They came from the labor movement, academia, policy circles, program administration, and state and local government, as well as from the ranks of the workforce itself, bringing with them new influences and approaches to child care compensation. This influx was very different from the first two phases of the movement, when virtually all the players were known to each other. Although it had been unwieldy at times, most compensation activists had been linked to one another through CCEP, newsletters, Worthy Wage retreats and annual Caucus meetings at the NAEYC conference. Now, this expansion of groups and players meant that it became harder to identify who constituted "the compensation movement."

Organizing among teacher and provider groups expanded in these years. DARE continued its efforts in Rhode Island, creating a Day Care Justice Co-op for providers, and winning state-funded health insurance for teachers and providers serving subsidized families. Elsewhere, more family child care associations were drawn into local Worthy Wage campaigns, notably in Seattle and Philadelphia, and into other community coalitions focused on workforce initiatives. Local Worthy Wage groups grew or newly appeared in many states, from Oregon and Colorado to Tennessee, North Carolina, Florida and Vermont.

There was an upswing in new approaches to union organizing among child care workers. In the late 1990s, CCW engaged in serious discussion with two unions about the possibility of creating a national child care union, but this never came to fruition, partly because of the lack of resources, and partly because the unions wanted to secure some local experience and success before launching such a large-scale effort. Center-based union organizing drives in Seattle and Philadelphia sought to work with employers in new ways and to link their workplace organizing to public policy campaigns. In Seattle, the Worthy Wage Campaign joined with Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Local 925, to create the Child Care Union Project. In Philadelphia, spearheaded

by staff at the worker cooperative center Childspace, many activists chose to affiliate with 1199, a local within the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) that has largely organized health care workers. New groups of Head Start workers were also organized in several states.

Organized labor also turned its attention to home-based child care workers during this period. SEIU and other unions became willing to entertain new approaches, such as working legislatively to establish a public authority as an “employer of record” with which to negotiate. Organized labor also joined coalitions with community organizing groups in ways that benefited child care workers; in Southern California, for example, ACORN and SEIU began working together on an organizing campaign among home-based providers and after-school recreational program staff. While the Seattle and Philadelphia union drives have been closely linked to the Worthy Wage Campaign, and thus to the earlier compensation movement, a number of the latter efforts have arisen among labor groups with much less connection to the established early childhood field.

Organized labor’s involvement in the child care compensation movement also moved beyond worksite organizing. The California State Labor Federation, for example, became an active co-sponsor of the legislation for California CARES, a program now operating in most counties of the state, offering stipends from \$500 to \$6,000 per year for teachers and providers based on their education and training. First brokered by the Oakland-based Labor Project for Working Families, the Labor Federation’s involvement in the CARES campaign has led to an ongoing engagement with child care activists around organizing and policy strategies for California. A similar coalition in New York has been involved in child care policy, and in several states, Living Wage or Jobs with Justice coalitions have developed ties with local Worthy Wage Campaigns.

Along with ACORN, other grassroots community organizing groups such as Coleman Advocates in San Francisco and Stand for Children in Oregon have assumed local leadership of the compensation movement. These new movement players vary in the extent to which they see themselves as part of the Worthy Wage or CCW tradition, or as creators of something new and unique.

In the first years of the Worthy Wage Campaign, child care center directors were often threatened by the discussion of wages and the possibility of organizing. Although some directors were engaged in the Campaign, notably in Seattle and Philadelphia, it took the dramatic staff shortages of this period to engage a sizeable group of administrators in advocacy around child care compensation issues. On the national level, and in states such as Massachusetts and California, program administrators relying on state reimbursements began pushing hard for rate increases and/or differential reimbursement rates for higher quality as the solution to the staffing crisis. Unfortunately, this strategy has not often gained guarantees that increased rates will be targeted to salaries; Colorado’s Educare program is a notable exception, linking rate increases to higher salary levels (Whitebook & Eichberg, 2002).

In many states, the establishment of child care compensation, retention and training initiatives also generated a new group of program developers and/or operators who have become important players in the compensation movement. Whether or not they viewed themselves as activists, they often became the public spokespeople about issues affecting the workforce. The TEACH scholarship program, for example, now operates in 25 states, and nearly every California county has a local office administering a California CARES stipend program. During the Clinton administration, the National Child Care Information Center, supported through federal dollars, also began hosting informational sessions and sharing information about compensation strategies.

The child care workforce has become a hot research topic as well. Initially, the impetus for research on the workforce came from teacher and provider activists. But since the mid-1990s, state government agencies have increasingly been initiating and supporting statewide salary studies; several states now routinely conduct county or state studies to jumpstart policy maker interest and/or to measure the progress of efforts to stabilize the workforce. In addition, more in-depth research examining the relationship between teacher/provider compensation, training and quality has been supported by public and private dollars. In 2000, for example, the federal Child Care Bureau funded a dozen research projects focused on the workforce. Further, the effort to evaluate a variety of compensation policy initiatives is enlisting a new crop of researchers to this area of study. PACE, an educational policy research group based at the University of California and Stanford, is currently conducting a large-scale evaluation of the California CARES program, in conjunction with the American Institutes of Research. Within academia, a growing interest in caregiving and in the economics of low-wage work has drawn women's studies scholars, sociologists and economists to examine child care workers in greater depth (Cancian & Oliker, 2000).

In Massachusetts, progressive academics joined with labor and compensation movement activists in 2000 to discuss long-term organizing strategies through a Scholars and Writers for Social Justice conference. In Seattle, the Economic Policy Institute worked closely with the Child Care Union Project to develop and pilot the Washington state Early Childhood Education Wage and Career Ladder. Many state level administrators and advocates joined together in North Carolina for a 1999 conference on compensation strategies called "Making Gains."<sup>30</sup> On the national level, the Urban Institute, the Women's Policy Research Institute, and Child Trends, to name a few, were funded during this period to focus on child care compensation-related projects. The more established national child care organizations, such as the Children's Defense Fund, the Wheelock College Center for Career Development, the Child Care Action Campaign, the National Black Child Development Institute, Zero to Three, and NAEYC, now routinely acknowledge compensation issues, if not always making them a central part of their organizational agendas. Women's groups such as the Ms. Foundation for Women

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<sup>30</sup> The co-sponsors of the conference were the Center for the Child Care Workforce, the Child Care Services Association, the National Center for Early Development and Learning, the North Carolina Division of Child Development, and the North Carolina Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development.



(through its New Voices project) and the National Women's Law Center also became involved once again in child care policy and organizing.

The involvement of these many new players has diminished the sense of marginalization that characterized the movement's earlier phases. It remains to be seen, however, whether this expanded group of players signals an advance in the child care compensation movement's ability to overcome the internal and external structural barriers that have plagued it. Certainly, the arrival of new players has called upon the "old-timers" to adjust to a more crowded playing field, bringing with it the decrease in intimacy and support from the early days of the Caucus and the Worthy Wage Campaign. In some cases, differences in gender, race, class and status have come to the fore among players. For those deeply committed to a teacher/provider-led movement, the influx of more prestigious or powerful groups has sometimes raised concerns that the voice of those working directly with children would be muted or overwhelmed. Many in the Worthy Wage Campaign believed that policy initiatives should always be developed with input from practitioners, yet more and more, proposals were designed with little say from those most affected by them. Even among players who share a belief in worker empowerment, such as unions and Worthy Wage groups, there have sometimes been tensions related to different organizational cultures around group process, power and individual autonomy (Tuominen, 2001). Some of the newer players, while favoring the improvement of child care compensation via public policy as a way to improve and expand services, were not necessarily pro-worker or pro-union in a traditional sense, and did not place the same value on teacher and provider leadership that the early movement had.

The Center for the Child Care Workforce, perhaps more than other groups because of its role as the sole national organization focused exclusively on this workforce, recognized that this shift was having a significant impact on its role in the movement. Since it had always played the roles of coordinator, facilitator and information clearinghouse for the movement, CCW was often called upon to assist new players in their projects, but in the process, often undermined its own standing, and/or increased the competition for the research and policy funding that has always been the mainstay of its budget. The proliferation of state and local projects related to compensation also made CCW's clearinghouse role more challenging, partly because it no longer had established relationships or links with every group involved in this issue. Deborah Stone notes that since the child care system itself is very fragmented and decentralized, the efforts to reform it are bound to reflect this: "So my sense is that, when there are multiple 'tables' and not one, it's actually better to have multiple organizations to go around to all those tables." Whether or not multiple organizations are the answer, they became the reality at this stage of the movement.

### *Primary Assumptions and Key Strategies*

One characteristic of effective social movements is the ability to articulate a clear, specific message that draws and holds public attention. To a considerable degree, the child care compensation movement met these criteria during the years 1995-2001. At

first, spearheaded by CCW's dissemination of research in conjunction with annual Worthy Wage Day events, and followed by other media coverage of the child care staffing shortage, the public received repeated reminders about low pay and the resulting crisis in child care quality throughout this period. Another characteristic of an effective movement is the taking of actions and articulation of solutions that garner political will. In this respect, the compensation movement made less headway; public messages about how to solve the crisis were inconsistent and not always specific. Sometimes there was a call for a major overhaul of the child care system, or a general call for increased pay, but with the exception of significant work on child care financing done by the Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals in Minneapolis, there was little attention to how this would be accomplished.<sup>31</sup> Public actions were creative but restricted to a few communities, and seldom disrupted the status quo.<sup>32</sup>

Still, in many states and communities, advocates developed and promoted a variety of specific compensation enhancement initiatives, even if they realized that these might be relatively piecemeal reforms, falling far short of a comprehensive restructuring of the child care system that would result in ongoing, substantial improvement in child care jobs (Whitebook & Eichberg, 2002). As these reforms have passed or been implemented, the sense of accomplishment is quickly joined with a recognition of their limitations. Two years into the CARES initiatives in California, advocates are beginning to explore next steps for the compensation movement. In Massachusetts, home to many of the largest successes in this arena, Bob French critically assesses the movement's progress:

While we have won some important victories, our efforts seem rather like chasing the horizon: we never seem to get there. State reimbursement rates stagnated for seven years (after the wage enhancement in the 1980s), with workers losing considerable ground to inflation. In 1996, an intensive, inclusive campaign won \$25 million dollars for rate increases for contracted and voucher child care, again, to shore up a rapidly expanding system, not because it was morally the right thing to do for staff or children served. A more recent rate increase of approximately 8.5 percent fell short of the 11 percent inflation over the same period. A \$10 million rate increase (less than 3 percent) was cut from the state budget

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<sup>31</sup> add footnote on AECP.

<sup>32</sup> Effective social movements among poor and disenfranchised groups have typically achieved success by disrupting "business as usual." With the exception of the closures of some child care programs on Worthy Wage Day in Seattle, Madison, and a few other communities, the movement has shied away from such efforts for legal and organizational reasons. Interestingly, at almost any gathering of child care teachers and providers, people move quickly to toward the idea of a walkout or strike, but tend to back off just as fast. The reluctance may be driven by ambivalence within the group, or second thoughts about whether such an action violates their role as nurturers. Coupled with real legal impediments to such an action in the absence of a union, the movement still needs a creative solution for a disruptive action that does not undermine children and families. It may be said that most of the disruptive actions undertaken by the movement during its history were directed within the field, toward the leadership of NAEYC, to urge the organization to get more involved in public policy advocacy in general and compensation issues in particular. On the one hand, they successfully shone the light on the wage issue in the field at large, but they ultimately did little to change NAEYC's direction as an organization.

because of a precipitous drop in state revenues, especially in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks. We face a widening staffing crisis (though temporarily mitigated by the recession) and find ourselves grappling with the same problems we contended with back in the 1980s.

Although research helped to advance the movement in these years, its strategic limitations also began to emerge. CCW's study of child care center accreditation, for example, helped point out the shortcomings of quality enhancement strategies that did not address staff compensation, and also identified how turnover prevented programs from improving their services (Whitebook, Sakai & Howes, 1997). Longitudinal studies such as the National Child Care Staffing Study Revisited (Whitebook, Phillips & Howes, 1998), and Then and Now: Changes in Child Care Staffing, 1994-2000 (Whitebook, Sakai, Gerber & Howes, 2001) revealed that higher wages were a key not only to retaining staff in the child care field, but to programs' ability to remain in operation. And at the state level, salary surveys often were influential in advocacy on behalf of particular programs, as in California, Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Carolina and Wisconsin. Several participants in our dialogues, however, noted that this prevalent research focus on low wages in child care has also had the unintended consequence of discouraging young people from entering this line of work. Further, as Bob French noted,

Every major Massachusetts child care plan that has appeared in the past two decades has spoken to the problem of low compensation in our field and attending staff turnover and quality erosion. With the notable exception of Dukakis' Day Care Partnership Initiative, however, they have been short on solutions. We have made our case to legislators by substantiating the compensation problem with facts culled from a variety of sources, including state-sponsored studies, statistics gathered by state agencies, and information from child care resource and referral agencies. While we have successfully made the argument that child care is a linchpin that makes welfare reform work, many policy makers are content to fund custodial care in which workers are poorly paid. We have not successfully linked public concern regarding school readiness with the need for program quality.

Organizing, public policy advocacy and leadership training among teachers and providers continued to be the major strategies of the movement. But what distinguished this phase was a higher willingness to test new ideas, to interweave approaches, and to build wider and more powerful coalitions. Reflecting on the limited success of many previous unionizing drives in child care, Seattle organizers recognized the need for new approaches as they developed the Child Care Union Campaign (CUP), a new configuration of teachers involved in organizing. The group worked closely with the local Worthy Wage Campaign in identifying centers that were receptive to organizing, negotiated a master contract for 12 centers at one time to streamline the process, and worked with the Economic Opportunity Institute on winning \$4 million dollars for the statewide pilot Early Childhood Education Wage and Career Ladder. The success of the

effort rested on the mix of players and their different strengths, as Barb Wiley, a CUP organizer and longtime Worthy Wage activist, notes:

I think that it has always been important to have a Worthy Wage Campaign here, and a place where people who do not feel that they fit into the union can speak up and develop their leadership. But there is a serious lack of power in Seattle Worthy Wages as an organization. We do not have a consolidated center. We do awesome things, but in terms of affecting the power system to get the changes we need, the union has been better able to do that. They have resources, they have infrastructure, and they have access to power players within the system. That is why right now, people at the unionized centers, and at approximately 120 other centers in the state, are getting an increased paycheck from the wage ladder. I truly believe the union campaign would not have been successful without the pre-work that the Worthy Wage movement did here. But the Worthy Wage Campaign can't leverage power like the union can. So I think you cannot have one without the other.

Certainly, in Seattle, the Wage and Career Ladder was the result of the CUP organizing campaign. The Economic Opportunity Institute did the crucial policy work, but the initiative for it and the grassroots pressure came from the union project. I don't know that it would have happened without the organizing. Ironically, some of these centers (now participating in the Wage and Career Ladder) were hostile to the union project in its early stages, not seeing then that it was about getting funds to help the whole industry. It's also interesting that, even with the incentive of a wage ladder, the union had difficulties organizing in parts of the Seattle area where there hadn't historically been a Worthy Wage movement, which is more evidence of needing a multi-pronged approach.

The Seattle union campaign was not without limitations: relatively few centers were organized, not all unionized centers benefited from the policy victory that delivered the Wage and Career Ladder, and the drive was not able to address family child care. Yet the participants showed a willingness to try new approaches and take uncomfortable risks in order to break new ground (Tuominen, 2001).

In Massachusetts, activists also found new success by mixing traditional union and community organizing strategies, as Nancy DeProse reflects:

We have been running a LEAP program in Massachusetts for three years, and I think that that came out of a recognition on our part that we were not reaching everybody who could be active in the child care community by bringing them into the labor movement. In fact, in the eighties, when we did that statewide campaign, we signed up hundreds and hundreds of workers. We had about 12 organizers going out to every center in the state that got a contract. Many of those centers never got the majority

status that would have brought them into a union – they were people who wanted to be part of a movement, but because we were using the strict union model, there was no room for them. There was no support from the union for us to somehow bring them into what we were doing, and they fell by the wayside. So I realized, from that point on, that there needed to be an additional or alternative way to deal with it – another sort of organization or group to bring other workers into the movement, because we were not going to get them all to the point where they were going to be a unionized workforce, worksite by worksite. The LEAP course opened up a door and allowed people to come and take a college-level course, get involved in advocacy, learn about unionization, learn about community organizing models, and then work in their own communities to try to make change. Where I have come to, is that union organizing is important but it cannot be the only way to do things.

Denise Dowell, the director of organizing for child care at Local 1199, AFSCME, described similar issues in the Philadelphia-area campaign:

We have evolved our strategy out of some of the limitations that we encountered along the way. The Worthy Wage Campaign enabled us to pull people together, [but] here in Philadelphia it was always more effective when it was director-driven; it was never terribly successful in reaching workers, and it was always limited in that the workers it reached were mostly white and better-educated, and worked at better-quality centers. That was partly a resource issue, and there was really not the kind of institutional support for workers that a union can provide. When I worked at Childspace [a worker cooperative], it was a great model in the sense that people had a real voice on the job. But we served a lot of low-income families, and we asked how we were ever going to meaningfully raise wages and benefits if we didn't do something about reimbursement rates. We recognized from the beginning that organizing workers into a union, while necessary, was not sufficient; we believed it was also necessary to restructure jobs, to get more public resources into the industry, and to improve the quality of care.

So from the start, we have worked hard at developing a strategy that pulls in all the partners within the industry in order to move three things along at the same time: organizing workers, organizing employers, and public policy. In organizing workers, we aim to include both family child care and center-based workers. We have been struggling with a strategy to include family child care providers, and our vision and our mission statement very much includes that segment of the workforce. But we have chosen to focus on child care workers in centers that serve low-income families – mostly because of the direct link to public policy and reimbursement rates, and because we feel we cannot do everything at once and have to start somewhere. We are also [stressing] the common interest

between the employers and the workers in this industry; if employers are not bought in, in a major way, we are not going to be able to effect long-term change [in public policy]. The fact is that the old way of doing things, of just going out and organizing workers, does not work in child care; it is too resource-intensive.

The recognition that new alliances and new approaches were needed to advance the movement also permeated the thinking of activists who were not involved directly in union organizing. In California, for example, repeated efforts failed to win compensation-related reforms in the state agencies that control child care funds. In response, advocates led by CCW drafted the California CARES legislation, through a months-long effort to solicit feedback from all sectors of the field, seeking in the process to strengthen an industry-wide coalition. Initially, the legislative strategy was designed to build alliances and raise public awareness, and it met these goals, but its passage emboldened advocates to work in coalition for similar programs at the local level, made possible in large measure by the 1998 approval of Proposition 10, a new tobacco tax that provided substantial new revenue for services for children ages 0 to 5. The development of locally-based CARES programs in nearly every California county has in turn created a new coalition that meets regularly to share lessons and challenges and to discuss state-level policy strategies. In Wisconsin, as well, Worthy Wage Campaign and child care union members joined in coalition with Living Wage activists and women's groups to win support for a child care salary enhancement project called REWARD.

Some initiatives during this period were developed and passed with little input from teachers and providers. But in other states such as North Carolina, Wisconsin and Massachusetts, it was central to the movement's strategy to politicize teachers and providers and to ensure their place at the decision-making table. In each of those three states, LEAP courses and training were used to build a cadre of outspoken teacher/provider leaders. LEAP-trained leaders worked on campaigns for better rates and community-based programs in Massachusetts, and won a 30-percent increase in the stipends distributed through the Child Care Wage\$ program in one community in North Carolina.

### *Accomplishments, Missteps and Challenges*

Over the last few years, the increasing number and types of players concerned about child care compensation generated new energy and approaches to addressing the issues. While public education remained a critical component of the movement during these years, organizing and policy work became more central. By engaging in coalitions with labor unions, women's groups and academia, movement activists began to think about untested strategies and possibilities. In turn, labor and women's groups, and some academics and policy makers, became sensitized to the complexities of the child care work world and the particular challenges of child care organizing. By engaging more fully in policy development and political campaigns, the movement experienced substantive victories that in many communities helped to renew its spirit and to draw new members. Activists also learned firsthand what it takes to create, advocate for and sustain

viable reforms, and came face-to-face with the realities of compromise in the political process. From a strategic perspective, initiatives won and new ways of organizing have created the opportunity to learn what different strategies can and cannot deliver with respect to improving child care jobs, and in so doing, can provide directions for the next steps of the movement.

Compared to previous phases of the movement, the successes of this period were heartening. Still, most states were not actively addressing workforce issues, and many of the newly-won programs were small and failed to provide ongoing, substantial increases in pay. Active union organizing was still restricted to very few communities; the campaigns, even when successful, organized small numbers of workers given the high level of effort; and some encountered intense anti-unionism.<sup>33</sup> And several long-term issues continued to challenge the movement, such as:

- How the current structure of the child care delivery system impedes successful and lasting reform, and works against organizing;
- How the diversity of the child care workforce leads to differing ideologies and goals within the movement itself, and constrains efforts to develop vision and strategy, particularly around issues of educational requirements and professionalism; and
- How the lack of a unified organizational home for teachers and providers, and the ongoing need to diversify the movement's leadership, weaken the power of workers' voices among the growing number of players in the compensation movement.

The responses to these challenges will greatly shape the movement in the coming years.

### **Working for Worthy Wages: 2002 and Beyond**

Even before the catastrophic events of September 11, 2001, the signs of a major downturn in the economy were evident, and child care advocates had begun to wonder whether this would diminish interest in compensation strategies or undermine existing initiatives. There are signs in some states that it will be a struggle to maintain existing direct child care funding, let alone quality enhancement dollars. It is too soon to tell the impact of growing unemployment on the child care industry, although many programs may well struggle for survival or even close. At the same time, a tighter job market may make it easier to attract and retain qualified teachers and providers, but only until the economy improves once again. With regard to policy, the greatest unknown is how the provisions of welfare reform will be amended when they come up for renewal this year. While the Bush administration has shown some interest in early literacy issues, support

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<sup>33</sup> Although it is beyond the scope of this paper, the issue of resistance to union organizing in child care deserves further attention. A number of efforts, reaching back to the 1980s, have been stopped by union-busting. The national for-profit organization, National Association of Child Care Management, is explicitly and aggressively anti-union in its written materials.

for child care workforce compensation is improbable. The recently introduced FOCUS Act, which calls for federal dollars to support training incentives for child care teachers and providers, appears unlikely to pass in the current political and economic climate.

In reflecting upon the history of the child care compensation movement, it is clear that the movement has pushed forward even when economic and political conditions posed major obstacles, and it must do so even amidst this national and international upheaval. Although the movement is likely to flounder in the short term, particularly because financial support for social change will be limited by the climate of the times, advocates can use this opportunity to identify new directions for the movement, based on the experiences of recent years.

A valuable way to begin would be to convene a representative sample of key players in the compensation movement – along with some experienced social activists from other movements who can provide alternative perspectives – to undertake the following three tasks:

1. Analyze the structural impediments to organizing – those built into the current child delivery system, those entrenched in much of the labor movement, and those stemming from the values and inclinations among the child care workforce – and develop strategies that might begin to shift or overcome them;
2. Articulate the strategic disagreements and questions that hamper the development of strategy, and that prevent alliances and coalitions necessary for substantive change (including questions of education and training requirements, and access to education);
3. Reflect upon the movement's current structure and how it might reorganize to consolidate its influence and effectiveness in the coming years.

This gathering or dialogue would not be in lieu of the many conversations already occurring around strategic questions related to policy reform, unionizing, and building a larger movement for universal services for young children; these will and should continue. But without focused attention on its structural, strategic and organizational limitations, including the limits on its financial resources, the compensation movement will hardly be able to meet the considerable challenges ahead.

With respect to the first task, participants in the dialogues conducted for this paper repeatedly spoke of the need for a massive social campaign for a universal program for young children as the precondition for ultimately improving child care jobs. They differed over details, such as whether it should be focused on three- and four-year-olds (universal pre-kindergarten) or extend to infants and toddlers (universal child care), whether it should be school-based or community-based, and how the system would be financed and delivered. With few exceptions, they assessed the service delivery system for young children in the United States as hopelessly broken (even as it grows larger and more complicated) and undermining of the workforce. The compensation movement must grapple with the structural features of the current delivery system, and with such pending developments as the greater emphasis on early education and literacy, which is



likely to create more divisions among sectors of the workforce. It must begin designing reforms to soften the system's most egregious faults while also promoting alternative visions of a new system. In undertaking this analysis, there is much to be learned from the limitations of current initiatives, as well as from other industries and occupations.<sup>34</sup>

For the second task, it will be important for the movement to grapple with dissension within its ranks that prevents the articulation of strategies and building of alliances. While it may indeed turn out that the movement will not reach consensus on certain controversial issues, a continued shying away from airing such differences can only hold the movement back.

In our conversations, activists differed about the extent to which the push for universal services for young children should become part of a larger caregiving movement (Stone, 2000). Their discussion also touched on the importance of engaging consumers and how this might be done. Mixed opinions were expressed about how to build such a caregiving movement, but all agreed that its success lay in attracting groups beyond the child care community, including leaders and reformers in labor, business and education. These alliances are unlikely to happen unless those within the field are more united, and that involves bringing together sectors and sub-sectors of the industry and workforce with a willingness to honestly look at what divides these various groups, and to recognize that consensus may not necessarily be possible or desirable. People caring for young children come from varied backgrounds, are motivated to do so by a variety of reasons, work in vastly different circumstances, and are afforded, albeit always insufficient, varying amounts of pay, status and respect. And it cannot be overlooked that the millions of women caring and educating young children are isolated, unorganized, and often moving in and out of the work. Cultural and linguistic barriers are many. Most workers have little or no opportunity to speak on their own behalf and to express their opinions around such issues as educational requirements and work standards. The compensation movement generally has sought to honor the experience of all in the workforce and has been reluctant to articulate any positions, such as educational requirements, that might displace or disadvantage particular workers or parents using care – but this reluctance, in turn, has prevented the articulation of clear goals and demands around wages.<sup>35</sup>

With respect to the third task, it is important to recognize that the child care compensation movement will continue to be embedded within a larger movement for good child care in the United States. For much of the last quarter-century, the movement

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<sup>34</sup> In the home health care field, for example, activists pursued a legislative strategy which ended up changing the very structure of the industry – i.e., by establishing “employers of record,” which then allowed home-based workers to engage in collective bargaining.

<sup>35</sup> Many compensation advocates support formal education and training for child care teachers and providers, while recognizing that there is a lack of affordable, accessible training opportunities that enable practitioners to enroll in degree programs. They propose that as the field becomes more professionalized, training opportunities culminating in degrees should become more accessible to members of economically disadvantaged and minority cultural and linguistic communities. Often, however, the higher education system itself is inflexible or indifferent on these questions of increased access, and so the possibility remains that some members of the workforce *will* be displaced.

has struggled with how to find a place for its issues, and a voice for teachers and providers, within the broader child care community. It has been relatively successful with the former goal, although the growing number of players requires new attention to this issue. But with the latter, child care workers remain mostly unorganized, are divided from each other by sector or sub-sector of the industry, and even when organized, are scattered across several unions or organizations. Their collective power has not been harnessed *en masse*, and their voices are relatively muted, even among those who are engaged in trying to improve compensation, and their potential as a political force is largely untapped.

The question of the organization and political power of child care workers requires not only critical thinking, but creative experimentation in the coming years. New approaches fitted to the child care industry, blending the best thinking of organized labor and grassroots community organizers, must be thought through and tried. And to be effective, these experiments in organizing cannot be separate or distinct from policy reforms, including compensation initiatives that help teachers and providers stay in the field, and the larger effort of building a campaign for a more universal child care system. In order for a large social movement for child care to take off, it will be essential to have teachers and providers who are prepared and trained to play a leadership role in it.

To begin this process, the movement has to engage in some reflection, as Shannah Kurland suggests:

No matter how tightly a corner of the industry is organized, things are going to get substantially better only if the entire industry is organized. That means the centers, and it also means the unlicensed caregivers. This does not just go for Rhode Island, but for any market. To reach the centers, the standard and probably most useful way to do it would be by forming unions. But that has its own set of challenges. And I think that instead of saying, ‘This is unionizing, so that works here and does not work here,’ and ‘This is community organizing, so that works here and does not work here,’ we will be better off if we step back, look at the whole industry, and ask, ‘What defines quality organizing?’ Do you want to have an inclusive organization where people’s leadership is developed and respected? Do you have a strategy about how you are going to build a solid, strong base? Can you identify where the resources are, and how to put on the pressure to deliver them? I think we have to get beyond the old union/non-union distinction, and look more at what kinds of organizing models we want.

Nancy DeProse adds:

If we said, what we are trying to accomplish is that people have better control of their workplaces in one way or another – that they are protected, that they have a voice at the table where decisions are being made, a voice that is powerful enough to make a difference – that would do it. Then, we

need to ensure that unions are representing the workers – not just speaking *for* workers but representing their voice. We need a way for people who are in workplaces that can be unionized, or those in workplaces that won't be, to both be a part of that system and have a voice at the table. We need to make sure that we are empowering family child care providers to be involved in the whole movement, as they are in Rhode Island in the Justice Co-op. We have to make sure that the people who have the voice and are representing workers are really representative. I think our movement's current leadership is way too middle-class and way too white to really represent those who are providing the actual care and education every day.

Although the issue of how well the leadership represents the workforce is not a new one, it takes on a different meaning in the current context, when so many players are approaching the compensation issue from different perspectives. In the early days, being in favor of improved compensation went hand in hand with being pro-worker, open at least in principle to organizing, and deeply committed to supporting and building the voice of teachers and providers. Today, some who are in favor of improved compensation might be explicitly opposed to unionizing the workforce, or may not see the need or benefit of bringing teachers and providers to the table as leaders and decision makers.

The Center for the Child Care Workforce, since its days as the Child Care Employee Project, functioned for years as the *de facto* voice for the movement and as the only national organizations substantially focused on child care workers. While it always recognized the limitations of its role, CCW managed to serve as a “container” for the movement. Now, as the movement has grown and changed, Executive Director Marci Young acknowledges that “CCW cannot hold all the pieces together. We can no longer exist the way we have and meet the needs of the different players in the movement. We are rethinking our role. We need to shake things up. We need a new coalition for linking people working on these issues. And we need an organization of teachers and providers that has a powerful place in that coalition. It's time for a change.”

The child care compensation movement has moved into a new stage and arena, as child care generally and compensation in particular have become more salient national issues. But movements often share a part of the weaknesses they are trying to address; this one, like the child care workforce it represents, suffers from the absence of a solid infrastructure of support. The task of building such an infrastructure must now become one of the movement's priorities and strategies, alongside its other work of organizing, public policy development and building public awareness. Only in this way can it effectively build on its remarkable and creative history of creating better child care jobs, and better care for children, in the United States.

## **Postscript: December 2002**

Shortly after this paper was completed in the fall of 2001, the Board of Directors of the Center for the Child Care Workforce approved a plan to close CCW as it was currently configured. The decision was due not only to CCW's ongoing structural and fiscal challenges, but to its strong belief that a new organizational home that would truly represent the child care workforce needed to emerge. CCW convened a series of community meetings across the U.S. in early 2002, so that varied constituencies could formulate proposals for next steps for the child care compensation movement – identifying appropriate organizations to undertake the various activities essential to the movement, developing strategies for providing financial resources to support the work, and clarifying the role of grassroots advocates in efforts to build an organizational home for teachers and providers.

As a result of these meetings, CCW invited interested parties to submit Letters of Interest describing their ideas for assuming key activities focused on child care workforce issues, and received enthusiastic responses from more than 30 organizations. The most promising proposal for continuing CCW's public policy and research work came from the American Federation of Teachers, a union representing over one million teachers and other workers nationally. After several months of discussion, CCW officially merged on November 1, 2002, with the AFT Educational Foundation (AFTEF), a nonprofit arm of the union that conducts, sponsors and disseminates studies and research in education and related fields, with the main objective of improving and restructuring the educational system. Two training organizations – Community Allies for Children, based in Durham, NC, and the MassLEAP Partner Collaboration, based at the Child Care Resource Center in Cambridge, MA – were chosen to continue providing the child care workforce leadership trainings previously offered by CCW.

CCW Executive Director Marci Young, now Deputy Director of CCW/AFTEF, notes:

We believe that joining forces with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) as a project of the AFTEF will provide an unprecedented opportunity to broaden the scope of CCW's work and expand our capacity to create a unified voice for the child care workforce. We see this affiliation with the AFTEF as a natural progression of our work. AFT recognizes that children who have a productive and positive early childhood education experience are better prepared for school, both socially and academically, and AFT President Sandra Feldman has taken an active role in advocating for improving early care and education services for young children.

Since CCW and AFT share a history of advocacy to improve child care jobs, we expect this affiliation to strengthen our collective capacity to influence public policy and to organize to improve wages, benefits, training and advancement opportunities for the child care workforce. Our activities and projects will continue to focus on developing and advocating for public policy that restructures

the early care and education delivery system to better address the issues of workforce recruitment and compensation; and influencing union and community organizing strategies that emphasize a unified voice for child care teachers and providers.

Shortly after the merger, AFT President Sandra Feldman announced the creation of the Child Care Workforce Alliance, an associate membership program within the union that would allow teachers and providers, whether or not they were currently in a collective bargaining unit, to become part of a larger advocacy force for child care employment issues and to receive certain AFT benefits.

At the same time, several other unions, including AFSCME and SEIU, and community organizing groups, including ACORN and local Living Wage Campaigns, considerably stepped up their efforts in 2002 to organize child care teachers and providers, and to devise public policy strategies for better child care compensation, particularly in California, Pennsylvania and Washington state. These unions and other groups are clearly interested in pursuing new, alternative organizing strategies, including ways to organize home-based child care providers – a particularly hopeful sign, given that the classic large-workplace union organizing model has never fit this field particularly well.

Also during 2002, many efforts to create or strengthen state-funded universal preschool systems gathered momentum across the U.S., emphasizing the need to provide better learning opportunities for three- and four-year-olds and to increase their school readiness. A CCW report on its three-year study of state-funded prekindergarten programs in five states, however, raised serious concerns about states' ability to adequately recruit, compensate and retain the skilled teaching force that universal preschool systems require (Bellm, Burton, Whitebook, Broatch & Young, 2002). And despite this increased policy emphasis on early education, a contradictory emphasis also persisted in many states, largely prompted by the needs of welfare reform: the ongoing public funding of unregulated, license-exempt child care, with little official regard for provider training or for the quality of the early learning experiences that children in such care receive.

Clearly, the terrain of the child care compensation movement is once again shifting, and even in the midst of an economic decline and international political tensions, there are hopeful signs that this newly-opening chapter of the movement's history could bring new visibility, strength and unity to the child care workforce.

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