

LRR FOCUS: Calumet Project for Industrial Jobs

Born out of the loss of 40,000 jobs in the deindustrialization of northwest Indiana in the early '80s, the Calumet Project for Industrial Jobs is a non-profit membership organization composed of unions, churches, community groups, and individuals.

The Calumet Project works on job retention and local economic development issues from a labor and community perspective. This includes both short term targeted actions (such as fighting an announced plant shutdown) and long term policy initiatives (such as setting up a regional industrial authority to protect the region's economic interests). Equally important, the Project seeks to open up the process of economic development to worker and community voices in the decision-making arena, an arena invariably under the exclusive control of business interests and the politicians.

Economic decisions for the region must be guided by one question: how does this affect the community and workers in this area? The Calumet Project approach channels all organizing toward its labor, church and community constituencies and makes sure that they shape and work for their own solutions.