



A GOOD ORGANIZING ISSUE

- **Is widely felt.** How common is the problem? How many workers face this situation? Many people must feel that this is a real problem and agree with the solution you're pursuing.
- **Is deeply felt.** Is this an issue that people feel strongly enough about to actually do something? It's not enough that many people agree, if none are really hot under the collar.
- **Is winnable.** It's hard to know for sure whether you *will* win, but it's possible to have a good idea whether you *can*. Your group should match your demand to the power you've already got.

To win, you'll need to make it harder for the decision-maker to keep saying no than to say yes. The more pressure you can bring to bear, the more issues will become winnable.

- **Builds the union and builds leaders.** Consider how this fight will build your capacity for future fights. Will the issue attract leaders or groups who haven't been very involved? Will it build solidarity between groups? Will it give you the chance to try an action that's one step beyond what you've done before? Will the solution lay the groundwork for future improvements?

Each fight should build off the last. It often happens that we don't win the concrete gain wanted, but we do come out smarter and better organized—which makes it more likely we can win next time.





TURN UP THE HEAT: ACTION THERMOMETER

Don't bring out your big guns right away. Start with an easy activity and get lots of people to participate. If that doesn't succeed, gradually increase the intensity of your actions, but make sure you don't leave people behind by escalating too quickly.

One way to visualize escalating tactics is to arrange them on a thermometer, with each action "hotter" than the last. For instance, here are the steps a group of New Haven teachers took to solve the mold problem at their school, beginning from the bottom of the thermometer:



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14. Walked out of a meeting en masse
 13. Spoke to the media
 12. Pulled a publicity stunt
 11. Called a meeting of supporters
 10. Used the result to formulate specific demands, with deadlines
 9. Filed an information request
 8. Reached out to parents
 7. Published a newsletter
 6. Formed a grievance committee
 5. Developed a communication network
 4. Conducted a health survey
 3. Gathered signatures on a grievance
 2. Defined their issue: air quality
 1. Met as a small group

