



VOLUME 2, ISSUE 9



SEPTEMBER 1997

UPS—the rebellion of the young and part-time

by David Bacon, Pacific News Service

Those who think unions are made up of middle-aged white men should take a second look at who's on the UPS picket lines. Young, multi-racial and militant, a new generation of part-time workers are breathing new life into the Teamsters—and possibly other unions across the United States. PNS associate editor David Bacon is a former union organizer who writes widely on labor and immigration.

Oakland, CA—John Cortez isn't a kid anymore. So why is he still trying to survive on the same part-time job that he got when he was young and single?

Because he works at United Parcel Service. Cortez got a job at the main place thousands of young people think of first, especially when they're going to school and trying to

Labor Day Sunday Picnic

Sunday, August 31

Noon to 6 p.m., CSUF (by Satellite Student Union)

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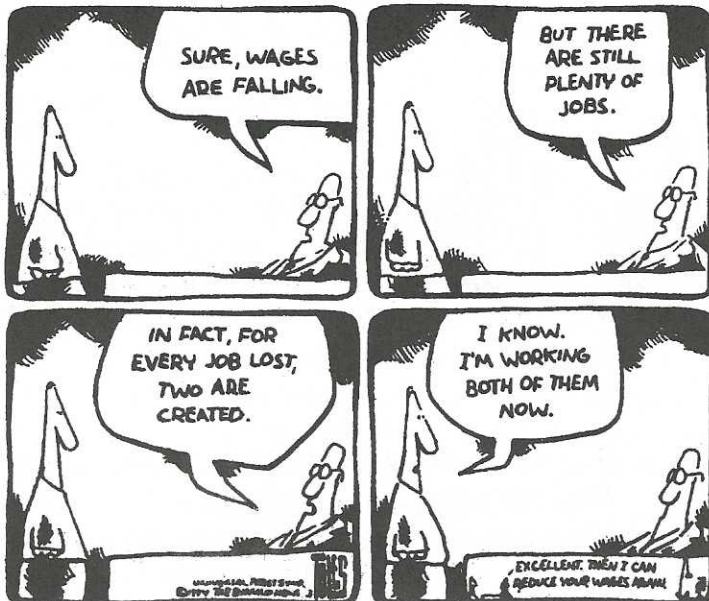
earn a living at the same time. The word has been out for years—if you can hook a job at UPS, you can work part-time on an off shift, earn a union wage, and get benefits. You can put yourself through school. With no dependents, you can live on that part-time wage.

But young people grow older. They get married and start families. They need a stable life and a paycheck which can pay the bills. That's the fuel behind the strike at UPS.

"I've been working 26–28 hours a week for years," Cortez explains. "It's really hard now. I have a wife and two kids. It's just not enough hours to pay the bills. My wife and I both work, and we still need government support to help us out. It's gotten to be more than we can tolerate."

Before the strike started, the waiting line to get a full-time job was still five years long. Cortez's oldest child will be in middle school before he gets there. "I can't wait five years. I need a change right now," he explains when asked why he went out on strike.

That full-time position would not only increase his hours. It would give him a substantial raise. Cortez makes \$11.60 per hour as a part-timer. A full-time driver can make over \$20.



(continued on p. 3)

The purpose

*of Labor/Community Alliance
is to strengthen and unite the
labor movement and the progressive
community in the Central San Joaquin
Valley through information sharing.
This publication is printed monthly and
includes a calendar of events. In addition
to providing the basis for mutual support
between labor and community groups,
this newsletter will be used to promote
dialog on the subject of creating an
independent political party for the
U.S. working class.*

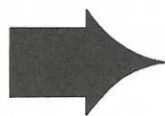
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**"There has never been but one question in
all civilization—how to keep a few men from
saying to many men: you work and earn
bread and we will eat it." Abraham Lincoln**



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Reflections

by M. Gloria Hernandez

Recently, I traveled with Amnesty International to witness the human rights abuses occurring as migrants cross the Tijuana/San Diego border. The goal of my trip was to visualize all the stories that I had been told by gente trying to cross the border. Following are some reflections on what I was witness to.

When I first saw the border/fence, cutting into the Pacific Ocean, I felt fear and pain. It was as if the ocean was being raped. In an attempt to stop the people from crossing la frontera, Gatekeeper now rapes the ocean. Will it stop there or will it next target the fish, the birds, the very air? As I met with Jaime, a 15-year-old from Guatemala, who has a medical condition that many have promised but failed to fix, I felt shame on behalf of those who failed to keep promises.

As I spoke to the mujeres at the Casa de las Mujeres I felt envy. The mujeres were organizing workers at the maquiladoras using the history of mujeres and organized labor as organizing tools. As I walked through the San Diego Migra holding center, I noted that the toilet, which didn't allow any privacy, had no toilet paper, and thought: What do they get out of stripping people of dignity?

As I spoke to the man with one leg, attempting to cross the three fences, I wanted to turn him into a bird to grace our country. When I bought trinkets from the indigenous woman, I felt humble before her and her children. She who has the blood of the gods, forced to beg on the streets. As I prayed at the simple altar of someone who attempted to cross over, I prayed for forgiveness of those who set up fences and borders.

As we crossed over into the United States and walked a mile into a ravine to visit migrant farmworkers who live under trees, I was shocked to find an altar with benches around it in a clearing. The workers told us that God is where one places Him. They spoke with dignity about their hardships. Santiago told me he missed his wife and other children, but he had God to comfort him.

People are people, it doesn't matter what color of skin, language spoken or their culture—what matters are the reasons they are forced to migrate to a country that doesn't want them.



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UPS, cont.

Many part-timers at UPS, like Scott Biales, don't really work part-time at all. Biales puts in a week which regularly runs from 48–50 hours. Sometimes he replaces a truck driver for a few hours, and gets a higher wage when he does. But mostly, he's working the original part-time position in the terminal into which he was hired years ago. And at a part-time wage.

Part-time workers provide UPS with many advantages. "They're usually young people, and they work them to death for those four hours. Then they just bring in more," according to Chuck Mack, secretary-treasurer of Oakland's Teamsters Local 70. The union tried to hold down the workload with a mid-contract strike two years ago, which sought to limit to 70 pounds the weight of packages workers were required to lift. Nevertheless, the present contract took the limit to 150 pounds, and UPS now wants the right to increase it even further at any time, with no negotiations.

"In a lot of terminals, two-thirds, or even three-quarters of the employees are part-timers," Mack says. They make up 80 percent of new hires since 1993. The lower-tier wages the company pays them helped generate a one billion dollar profit for UPS last year.

UPS is asking for union concessions that would make the problem even worse, however. The company wants to subcontract out the jobs of feeder drivers, who drive between terminals. These jobs are promotions for the delivery drivers in the familiar brown trucks, and are held by the most senior workers. If feeder driver jobs are contracted out, delivery drivers won't move up into them, creating openings for part-timers in the terminals. That would make the waiting line for Cortez and Biales even longer.

Some 185,000 Teamster members are on strike, and the union, riven by internal discord over reforms, has closed ranks behind them. Mack himself ran unsuccessfully against President Ron Carey's slate last year. Now, however, "I agree totally with the stand Carey has taken," he says. "Politics is a luxury when we've got the future of our members at stake."

On the picketlines, strikers seem energetic and confident, knowing they have the company shut down tight. At the big UPS terminal near the Oakland airport, the largest hub in northern California, they break all the stereotypes about union members. Picketers' average age is in the 20s. African-Americans rub shoulders with whites, Latinos with Asians. The loudest picketers are women.

Older workers in union halls used to bemoan the apathy of the young—"They never went through what we did," the complaint would go. "They don't understand why the union is important." These days, it's the young strikers at UPS—multiracial and militant—who are giving the union a new breath of life.

(<http://www.pacificnews.org/jinn>)

On the UPS picket lines in Fresno

We talked with picketers at the Fresno UPS facility to get their opinions on the strike. Here's what some of them said:

Pete Nuñez

LP: *Pete, why are you out here?*

PN: We out striking against UPS in an effort to win a good contract for our members. We're basically out here tonight to show solidarity. This strike is especially important because UPS has taken the stance that they want to break the union by taking control of our pensions and our health and welfare benefits. It seems to me that in this day and age, when a company is making a lot of money and they're asking their employees to take a step backwards, that does not seem right.

LP: *Does this strike have meaning to your family?*

PN: I have a daughter who will be a freshman at UCLA this fall. This couldn't have happened at a worse time. But we're going to struggle, do everything we can to keep her there and make sure that dream does not fall apart, while at the same time upholding our truths and values and fighting it out to the end.



Northland Poster Collective, 1-800-621-SUEC

Stacy Floratos

LP: *Why is this strike important to you?*

SF: I have a family to take care of. I need my benefits, and when I retire I'm going to need my pension, and I'm afraid that if UPS gets hold of either one there's not going to be much to look forward to. They'll start taking and taking and taking, because that's the way it's looking right now. They're willing to lose millions to prove a point that obviously they plan to make up somehow, and I feel they plan to take it from us. It's important to keep my benefits. I have two small children. Right now we have a great health plan, and I think we deserve it. We're the ones that help UPS make all their money. I heard that even before we went on strike UPS was out to teach the Teamsters a lesson. I know the Teamsters are not going to budge. The offer the company has on the table isn't worth voting on. We feel that if we stick together, we'll win and keep the union together, too.

(continued on p. 4)

Carpenters convince Macy's

by Tom Walls

Early in June of this year, Tom Estes, Business Representative for the Carpenter's Union, discovered Macy's Department Stores had contracted with a non-union San Diego firm for the installation of store fixtures in its new outlet located in Fresno's Fashion Fair Mall.

When discussions with Macy's executives failed to resolve the problem, Estes contracted George Gunderson, picket captain for the Central Valley area. "George was anxious to get his program up and running," Estes said. "This appeared to be a good opportunity for him and his crew to flex their muscles a bit."

One early June morning, Gunderson, along with volunteers from Locals 701 and 83L of Fresno, and Local 1109 of Visalia, arrived at Fashion Fair in a pickup loaded with handbills and refreshments. Part of the strategy, Gunderson said, was to be very gracious and polite with the public. "When we were not passing out handbills, we opened the mall doors for customers," Gunderson said. "We even helped a few shoppers locate their cars in the huge parking lot."

"Other projects are being planned right now. We hope Office Max, Circuit City and a few others were watching."

Police were called, as expected. Following a quick survey of the situation, officers informed Macy's managers that the union's activity did not violate any laws. Macy's launched a counter-attack. "They assigned their own store personnel to go to the mall entrances and do what we were doing," Gunderson said. "They were opening doors for customers."

The handbilling had been in progress for nearly seven weeks when Richard Wright, Regional Council Director of Organizing, made the decision to turn up the heat. On July 17, handbills were replaced with picket signs.

Macy's requested a meeting. Within hours, Wright emerged from the meeting with an announcement: Macy's would build their planned home furnishings store in Fresno using a union contractor. They would also insist that the contractor building their Stockton outlet reach an agreement with the union. Negotiations with a contractor in the Sacramento area are now in progress, Wright said.

More than 70 carpenters, lathers and drywallers participated, along with family members who telephoned Macy's corporate offices. Gunderson praised the efforts of Wright. "Richard was really supportive from the administrative side," he said. "That was critical to our success." Gunderson emphasized this was not a stand-alone campaign. "Other projects are being planned right now," he said. "We hope Office Max, Circuit City and a few others were watching."

Fresno UPS story, cont.

LP: When we first started talking there was a truck that drove over the Highway 99 overpass and you recognized it as whom?

SF: My dad! Yeah, he always comes by with a special toot showing his support because he's also a teamster, so we listen for him every night, we knew he'd be coming by tonight.

Dennis Garrett

LP: Why are you out here tonight?

DG: I'm here to support my brothers and sisters. We've got part-timers here who've been part-time for 10 years and more. And they're doing eight hours a day. That's not right.

LP: What does this strike mean to you and your family?

DG: It's hurting us financially. I've had to pick up a minimum wage job to put food on the table. It's working in a sweatshop. It's not a lot of fun.

LP: Are you in favor of the strike?

DG: Definitely. I'm a diabetic, and if the company takes over our insurance it's going to cost me an extra \$200 a month right off the bat. That's not counting my three kids' monthly emergency room trips, ear infections and all that.

Teamsters Strike Song

"We Can't Live on a Part-time Salary"
Lyrics: Julie McCall Tune: "Yellow Submarine"

Chorus: We can't live on a part-time salary,
A part-time salary, a part-time salary.
(Repeat)

When you work for UPS,
There's lots of rules and lots of stress.
Night and day we work like dogs,
But they won't give us full-time jobs.

Chorus
Full-time mortgage, full-time rent,
Before it's earned, my paycheck's spent.
Part-time car note? No such thing.
Bills are all the postman brings.

Chorus
The bosses all make lots of bread.
There's no way I can get ahead.
But we'll see justice in the end,
'Cause Teamsters always fight to win.

Chorus

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What Is Labor Day?

Labor Day, the first Monday in September, is a creation of the labor movement and is dedicated to the social and economic achievements of American workers. It constitutes a yearly national tribute to the contributions workers have made to the strength, prosperity and well-being of our country.

More than 100 years after the first Labor Day observance, there is still some doubt as to who first proposed the holiday for workers. Some records show that Peter J. McGuire, general secretary of the Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners and a co-founder of the American Federation of Labor, was first to suggest a day to honor those "who from rude nature have delved and carved all the grandeur we behold."

But Peter McGuire's place in Labor Day history has not gone unchallenged. Many believe that Matthew Maguire, a machinist, not Peter McGuire, founded the holiday. Recent research seems to support the contention that Matthew Maguire, later the secretary of Local 344 of the International Association of Machinists in Paterson, N.J., proposed the holiday in 1882 while serving as secretary of the Central Labor Union in New York. What is clear is that the Central Labor Union adopted a Labor Day proposal and appointed a committee to plan a demonstration and picnic.

The First Labor Day

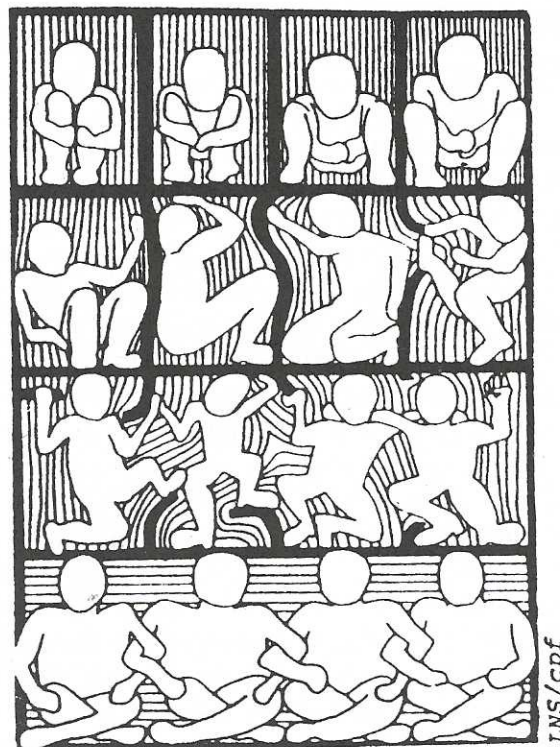
The first Labor Day holiday was celebrated on Tuesday, September 5, 1882, in New York City, in accordance with the plans of the Central Labor Union. The union held its second Labor Day holiday one year later, on September 5, 1883.

In 1884 the first Monday in September was selected as the holiday, as originally proposed, and the Central Labor Union urged similar organizations in other cities to follow the example of New York and celebrate a "workingmen's holiday" on that date. The idea spread with the growth of labor organizations, and in 1885 Labor Day was celebrated in many industrial centers of the country.

A Nationwide Holiday

The form that the observance and celebration of Labor Day should take were outlined in the first proposal of the holiday—a street parade to exhibit to the public "the strength and esprit de corps of the trade and labor organizations" of the community, followed by a festival for the recreation and amusement of the workers and their families. This became the pattern for the celebrations. Speeches by prominent men and women were added later, as more emphasis was placed on the economic and civic significance of the holiday. A resolution of the American Federation of Labor convention of 1909 designated the Sunday preceding Labor Day as Labor Sunday.

The Frank Little Chapter of the Labor Party is proud to participate in this year's Labor Day event. *We encourage all union and community members to come out on Sunday, August 31, for the Labor Day Sunday Picnic at CSUF*



Labor News

Budget deal. Dropped from the big budget bill signed by President Clinton last month were several anti-worker and anti-union provisions in the GOP's original bill—including a provision making it easier to reclassify employees as independent contractors, a ban on labor protections for workfare workers, onerous union financial reporting requirements, welfare privatization and NAFTA extension to the Caribbean.

Bad Boy Pete. Governor Pete Wilson vetoed a bill that would have cleared the way for restoration of the state's daily overtime law. Earlier this year, the governor-appointed Industrial Welfare Commission voted to scrap a law that called for overtime pay after eight hours on the job and replaced it with a 40-hour-a-week rule. "Forcing people to work longer hours for lower pay is not a move designed to win popularity," said Art Pulaski, executive secretary-treasurer of the California Labor Federation.

Guess? who got caught. On July 16 and 17 California Labor Department officials uncovered a string of illegal industrial home-work operations used by Guess? Inc. contractors. At least 24 bags of "hot goods"—clothes produced under condition in violation of wage-and-hour laws—were seized by inspectors. Last year state officials also found Guess? clothing in illegal home-work operations. A state court ruled July 30 that six Los Angeles malls can restrict picketing and leafleting by UNITE workers protesting wages and working conditions at Guess? The malls may request the identities of protestors before allowing picketing, and preview signs and leaflets that would be displayed and distributed, the court said.

Eclectic, diverse . . . and strange?

The KFCF story

by Vic Bedoian

Try an audio experiment sometime. Twist the radio dial across the entire AM or FM spectrum, stopping at each station, listening to what is on. Pretty soon it will become clear what a limited range of offerings exist on the local airwaves. The now-historic term "vast wasteland" comes closest to describing what you will experience. You will hear music, of strictly limited genre and always very commercially viable, along with a couple of all-news stations—mostly of a conservative bent. With few exceptions, the programming will be shattered every few minutes with inane and over-modulated advertisements, yammering for your attention and dollars.

A much-needed oasis in the cultural desert of local radio is Pacifica station KFCF at 88.1 FM. With a signal range that reaches from Modesto to Bakersfield and the Sierra Foothills, KFCF has been bringing programming from Berkeley-based KPFA to the Valley for over 20 years. The station is owned and operated by the Fresno Free College Foundation, a community organization long concerned with free speech, civil liberties, cultural enlightenment and political diversity.

It's impossible to put a label on KFCF's programming. The words "eclectic" and "diverse" or sometimes even "strange" all apply, but do not entirely describe the range of



programs one will hear in a typical week. On a given day you can hear music from all over the world, in-depth analysis of our social and political reality, interviews with famous authors, news of community affairs or avant-garde cultural presentations. About 85 percent of KFCF programming is simulcast from KPFA and Pacifica Radio. The balance is locally produced, including live broadcasts of meetings of the Fresno County Board of Supervisors, weekly public affairs programs on the environment, gay and lesbian issues, local literature and community politics, as well as music shows.

Being an affiliate of the Pacifica network provides KFCF, and its local listeners, with a national and global connectivity

that links us to the rest of the planet and puts us in touch with people and communities far away who have common concerns. Pacifica Radio currently produces four nationally distributed programs about life and politics: "Democracy Now" with Amy Goodman, "Living Room" with Larry Bensky, Pacifica National News, and "We The People" with Jerry Brown. Pacifica also presents extensive coverage of important national events, such as the Iran-Contra hearings.

The reason KFCF and Pacifica can do all this is because it is *non-commercial* and *listener-sponsored*. Without the burden of commercial entanglement or government funding, it is free to provide programming of uncompromising quality to the local community. For more information, please call KFCF at 233-2221.

Day of Conscience

by Mike Rhodes

No one wants to purchase products made by children, teen-aged girls—or any workers—stripped of their rights and forced to work long hours in harsh sweatshop conditions under armed guards for wages of 20–30 cents an hour. The people of the United States and Fresno deserve the chance to raise our voices and affirm the dignity of life and human rights over corporate indifference and greed.

The National Labor Committee has begun a campaign to get one million people to sign a petition to President Clinton, calling for an end to child labor and sweatshops. These petitions will be presented to the President in stages—on the day following Thanksgiving (the busiest shopping day of the year) and again during the last week of December.

The petition (available locally by calling 226-0477) is part of a three-month mobilization to affirm human rights over sweatshops that will be initiated on Saturday, October 4 with a National Day of Conscience to End Sweatshops. On October 4 the Holiday Season of Conscience will be announced, providing consumers the opportunity to shop with their conscience, rewarding the companies moving in the right direction while penalizing those that continue to use child labor and undermine human rights.

This is the most critical moment for the millions of decent people of our country to raise our voices to help lead this debate. In fact, not only are the companies watching, but people around the world are anxious to see if we can create a model that will effectively hold the multinational corporations accountable for guaranteeing human rights and paying a living wage.

For more information about the "Day of Conscience" contact: National Labor Committee, 275 7th Ave, 15th Floor, New York, NY 10001, (212) 242-3002. Petitions are available locally by calling 226-0477.

Why are people joining the Labor Party?

by Mike Rhodes



M. Gloria Hernandez, center, with friends in the Latino Civil Rights Network.

M. Gloria Hernandez joined the Labor Party last year. She is a community activist, currently working for The Women's Foundation as coordinator of the Immigrant Women's Access Project. She was a member of the California Community Workers Union/UAW District 65 for over 18 years and has volunteered to help the UFW for many years.

LP: *How did you hear about the Labor Party, and what got you to become a member?*

MGH: I first heard about the Labor Party while on sabbatical in Montana, from a member of the the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic workers. I thought

"Hey, this is great! A political party that supports working people and social justice." I have never considered myself to be a Democrat or Republican, so this new party made a lot of sense. When I got back to Fresno somebody invited me to a meeting of the local chapter—and I joined.

LP: *Now that you have been coming to the Labor Party monthly meetings for awhile, what can you tell us about the direction of the group?*

MGH: I don't know much about the national organization but am very excited about the local group. They are building a community emergency response network to be used to support union functions like strikes and picket lines and also to respond to community needs, like welfare reform, etc. Local chapter members have much to offer and learn from each other.

LP: *Do you think that the Labor Party should run candidates for public office?*

MGH: Not at this time. We need to stick to the issues and not get caught up in what could become divisive electoral campaigns. The Labor Party needs to build a base of support right now. After awhile, things might look different.

LP: *What projects do you think the Labor Party should be working on?*

MGH: Many people in the Valley do not understand what it means to be a union member. Fact sheets could be developed as to why one should belong to a union. For example, with welfare reform eliminating many of the benefits like Medi-Cal, health insurance packets are more attractive and could be used as an organizing tool. Fact sheets could be developed as talking points from different perspectives: women, elderly and working conditions, etc.

People do not understand why the unions are limited to what's on the contract. Many do not understand their own contracts, or what a contract is, what is an unfair labor practice, what is the procedure to file a grievance. These are things each union member and non-union member should know. I have also explained to people that the California Industrial Welfare Commission is supposed to be like the godparents of the working nonunion poor. Now we need to explain that the IWC is not working, and that is why we need more union protections.

Peace Center adopts resolution against arms sales to Mexico

On August 9, 1997, the Board of Directors of the Fresno Center for Nonviolence, at its regularly scheduled meeting, adopted the following resolution:

As board members of the Fresno Center for Nonviolence, and as concerned citizens of the United States, we are alarmed by the increase of arms shipments from the United States to the government of Mexico during the past four years. These shipments have included helicopter gun ships and other forms of weaponry that are quite likely, either now or in the future, to be used by the Mexican government against its own citizens. Since Mexico is under no credible threat of invasion by a foreign power, there is no justification for placing such weapons in that country. We hereby urge the government of the United States to dramatically curtail the shipment of military hardware to the Mexican government.

Group urges KMJ advertiser boycott

Team Effort Against Media Madness is asking area residents to boycott KMJ advertisers as a protest against talk show host Ray Appleton's relentless trashing of UPS strikers. Appleton has appointed himself judge, jury and executioner of UPS strikers, spending hours of his weekday noon to 3 p.m. slot badmouthing strikers and their motives. TEAMM urges you to jot down the names of KMJ advertisers and refuse to buy their products or services.

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A Call to Action

Are you willing to walk a picket line in solidarity with a local strike? Are you willing to send a letter to Sacramento to oppose welfare reform, help on an organizing drive or leaflet a store in support of a boycott?

If you answer yes to any of these questions, we need to hear from you. The Frank Little Chapter of the Labor Party is organizing an emergency response network to mobilize Valley residents in support of local actions. We need to be able to respond quickly and powerfully in support of our sisters and brothers in the struggle for economic and social justice.

Many of us read about strikes and marches in the paper, but we have no way to find out what is needed and how we can help. All too often the bosses and politicians can make end runs around us before our friends can be rallied to help. In these harsh economic times, we need to be able to come to each other's aid and provide mutual support when we confront the rich and powerful.

If you agree, please fill out and return the accompanying form. Send it to:

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