

Labor/Community ALLIANCE

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AUGUST 1998

Workers organize at The Fresno Bee

News you won't find in The Bee

by Brian McNally

On July 13, just ten days away from their union election date, the pressroom employees of *The Fresno Bee* congregated at a local Denny's restaurant to hold what they hoped would be one of their last meetings without union representation in the workplace. It was last fall, several years after *The Fresno Bee* had successfully chased the unions out, that workers from the pressroom and the packaging and distribution departments decided they were fed up with the poor treatment they were receiving from management and sought to regain union affiliation.

As the election date approached, the company began asking for six more months to prove that they would respond to their employees' grievances. But the workers recognized this request as an attempt to trick them. Management wanted to derail their organizing efforts with promises that might be delivered for six months if they were lucky, but most likely would be discarded the day after the election. Allen Washington, a *Bee* pressroom employee, exclaimed in reaction to the company's ruse, "We don't need to give the company six months. We gave them five years."

Those five years after the pressroom employees lost their union representation—and the ten years from the time packaging and distribution employees lost theirs—began

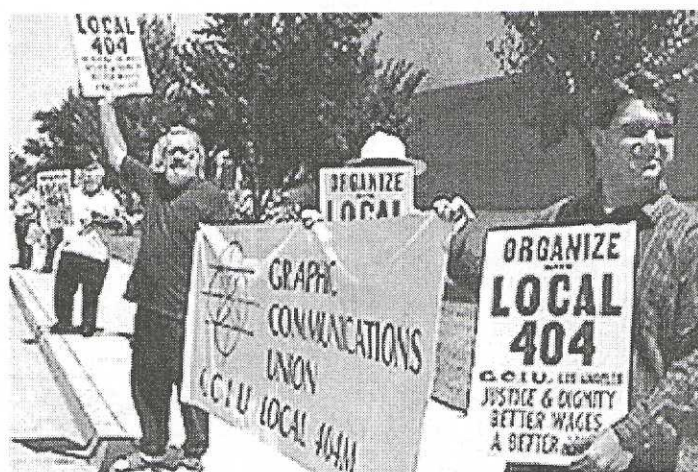


Photo by George Elfie Ballis

with fulfilled promises from management at *The Fresno Bee*. The company had given the workers its word that it would treat them better if they decertified their unions. But it wasn't long before the company began to abuse its power over the recently un-unionized workers. First management began to reduce the number of employees on each shift. Then retired workers weren't being replaced. And when employees called in sick, their shifts weren't being covered. In the printroom, this reduction in the number of workers assigned to a given shift was causing safety hazards.

The company also began to use its apprenticeship program in the pressroom as a source of cheap labor rather than a skills-building system. In packaging and distribution, good-paying full-time jobs were turned into part-time positions that offered little more than the minimum wage. The list of abuses kept mounting: safety compromises, favoritism in the

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Labor Day Picnic

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The purpose

of Labor/Community Alliance
is threefold: (1) to strengthen and unite
the labor movement and the progressive
community in the Central San Joaquin
Valley through information sharing,
(2) to promote and defend the rights
of local working people, and (3) to
help organize the unorganized.
This publication is printed monthly and
includes a calendar of events.

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Letters to the Editor

I must disagree with Larry Langford's article (June/July) that the privatization of Social Security may make profits for corporate interests, for in reality the investor will gain more in real bucks for his dollar in the long run.

I speak from personal experience as a teacher for 31 years. In my first year of teaching, I took personal responsibility for my retirement by investing \$50 per month and increased this amount as my salary increased, until I was investing \$500 per month in my final ten years of teaching. My gain in dollars for retirement has grown four fold, which I could never have secured through Social Security. Had I invested in Social Security, my return would have been 1 to 2 percent per year. Stock returns tend to increase around 9 percent per year. Long term bonds are going for around 6 to 8 percent.

Social Security is even worse for the poor. The payroll tax is a flat tax, taking the same percentage from rich and poor alike. But the tax stops after \$62,000 in annual income, so the rich actually pay a lower percentage than the poor. And the tax is only applied to wages. Capital gains and inheritances are not subject to the tax. In addition, the poor are likely to start working at a younger age. The rich are more likely to have gone to college and graduate school, so they pay into the system for a shorter period of time. And the rich tend to live longer than the poor, so they collect benefits for a longer period of time.

So don't believe the myth that Social Security has been an unmitigated success providing a comfortable retirement for those who otherwise might have spent their retirement years in poverty. The rate of return is pitiful by market standards, and the termination of benefits upon death borders on criminal. It benefits the wealthy more than those less well off.

Ray Ensher, Fresno, CA

Correction

In our June-July issue, we incorrectly stated that Howard Watkins recommended a YES vote on Prop. 223. In fact, Howard urged us to vote NO. We apologize for the error.



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California politics

Let's not sit this one out

The defeat of Proposition 226 was a huge victory, and it's critical that we keep the momentum going through November. Campaigns against right-wing candidates statewide—that's where the action is, starting with the governor's race. Say what you want about Gray Davis' campaign "style," we all know that Dan Lungren is major bad news. Compare:

Minimum Wage

Gray Davis: Supported Minimum Wage Initiative, Prop. 210, which provided 2 million hard-working Californians a living wage.

Dan Lungren: Did not support Prop. 210, despite the fact that the purchasing power of California's minimum wage had dropped to a 40-year low.

Daily Overtime

Gray Davis: If elected governor, will sign legislation restoring daily overtime pay law, protecting the paychecks of 8 million California workers.

Dan Lungren: Defended the Wilson administration's elimination of daily overtime regulations. Cost to California workers: over \$1 billion a year in overtime pay.

Pension Protection

Gray Davis: Opposed the Wilson administration's raid of public employee pension funds to balance state budget. Supported Prop. 162, which kept politicians' hands off pension funds.

Dan Lungren: Defended Wilson's raid of public employee pension fund. Opposed Prop. 162.

Job Safety

Gray Davis: Supported Prop. 97, which restored California's Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA). Supports strong ergonomics regulations to prevent repetitive stress injuries on the job.

Dan Lungren: As Congressman, voted to cut funding for OSHA. Did not support Prop. 97. Defended Wilson's gutting of ergonomics regulations.

Prevailing Wage

Gray Davis: Supports strong enforcement of prevailing wage laws for construction workers on public works jobs.

Dan Lungren: Defended Wilson administration attempt to undermine prevailing wage laws and reduce construction workers' pay and benefits.

This race is of national significance because the next California governor, with the legislature, will redraw congressional lines in our state. Congressional Democrats now have a six-seat lead over Republicans. It's possible they could pick up 10 more seats! So California could be key to giving the ultra-right wing the boot in November. (For reasons we should do this, see "The Top Ten" on page 9.)



Local activists at the corner of Blackstone and Shaw help to defeat Prop. 226 on June 2.

Working families kill Prop. 226

In an amazing turnaround, powered by tens of thousands of union volunteers, California voters smashed the right-wing backed Proposition 226 that would have silenced the political voice of working families. Throughout the state, union volunteers walked more than 5,000 precincts, visited 18,000 worksites and staffed phone banks that made 650,000 calls to union homes. Their work turned a 72 to 21 percent margin in favor of Prop. 226 into a June 2 primary defeat of 54 percent no to 46 percent yes.

Union members rejected the Paycheck Deception Act by a 71-29 percent edge. Prop. 226 backers had hoped to use California as a springboard for their campaign to drive working families out of politics nationwide. Newspaper headlines throughout the country told the real story. *USA Today* said working families pulled off a "miracle" by defeating Prop. 226. "Gingrich and allies big losers," said the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and the *Los Angeles Times* said the vote "gives labor new vigor."

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One Letter = One Hundred Votes

by Larry Langford, Labor/Community Alliance

Because of the budget surplus, Gov. Wilson is proposing a repeal of the Vehicle License Fee, the tax we pay to register our cars each year. No doubt many of us grumble when the time comes to pay this fee, but there are good reasons to keep it in place. For example, according to the California Labor Federation, elimination of the license fee would cut four billion dollars from the state's annual revenues, money badly needed to repair roads and bridges, or to make improvements in our horribly underfunded schools. In addition, the repeal of this fee would favor the wealthy, as these things almost always do. It is estimated that 61 percent of Californians would save only about \$61 per year, whereas those who buy or lease luxury cars would save about ten times that much.

Not all of the news out of Sacramento is bad, however. A number of our state senators and assembly people are working to pass legislation that would actually help working families, and we should give them our support:

➔ **SB 1968:** This bill, sponsored by Hilda Solis (D-El Monte) would guarantee wage and benefit parity for part-time workers. The bill has already passed out of the Senate, with Jim Costa (D-Fresno) as the sole Democrat voting against it. It now goes to the Assembly, where the fight to stop it will be ferocious. Employer groups have already labeled it a job killer, and Gov. Wilson will no doubt agree with them.

➔ **SB 495:** Sponsored by Senator Rosenthal (D-North Hollywood), this bill would increase the weekly State Disability Insurance from \$336 to \$490. Since the Unemployment Compensation Disability Fund now has over \$1.2 billion in its coffers, it would be the right thing to see that more of this money makes its way to injured workers.

➔ **AB 480:** The Family Sick Leave bill, sponsored by Assemblyman Wally Knox (D-Los Angeles), would permit workers to use half of their accumulated sick leave to care for an ill child. One of the great stresses on working people is the struggle to provide their children with adequate day care and health care, a struggle that is especially desperate for the working poor. Passage of this bill would provide much-needed assistance to many California families. Defeated by one vote in the Assembly in May, it will soon be brought to a floor vote again.

Remember, our elected representatives pay attention to our letters and e-mail messages, and they consider each one the equivalent of one hundred potential votes. So contact them and let them know what you think about these bills. To get the mailing and e-mail addresses of your senator and assembly person check the web site at www.leginfo.ca.gov.

Pastors for Peace once more head for "Forbidden Cuba"

by Romina A. Green



On July 9, the Eighth Pastors for Peace Friendshipment Caravan stopped at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence—destination Cuba. Greeted by the Channel 24 News and KMJ Radio News, the caravanners proudly arrived with a truck full of aid. On the back of the truck was a beautiful painting of the Canadian and Cuban flags joined.

This group that passed through Fresno comprised mainly Canadian citizens from Vancouver, as well as one Scot and a Swede. A sense of solidarity with Cuba is already strong in Canada and much of Europe. The purpose of this trip through the United States to Cuba is to raise awareness of the injustice of the U.S. embargo on Cuba.

Since 1963, the United States has imposed an economic embargo on this small Caribbean nation for the following outdated and untenable reasons:

- ❶ Punishment for expropriation of "U.S.-owned" properties
 - *although Cuba has a standing offer for negotiation*
- ❷ Isolation of a Soviet threat
 - *even though the Cold War has ended*
- ❸ Cuba's independent foreign policy which occasionally conflicted with U.S. interests
 - *but Cuba no longer maintains an active foreign policy due to its current economic difficulties*
- ❹ Cuba's human rights abuses
 - *U.S. support for brutal dictators and oppressive militaries throughout the western hemisphere lends little credence to this argument*

Over time and with the passing of presidents, the embargo has not been loosened in any way. In 1992, the Torricelli Law was passed—tightening the embargo even further by making it virtually impossible for foreign subsidiaries of U.S. corporations to do business with Cuba, and not giving commercial ships access to U.S. ports if they are carrying goods for Cuba. The embargo is not well perceived in other countries; this year, all but three countries expressed opposition to the blockade.

As a form of protest against the U.S. government's inhumane treatment of the Cuban people, Pastors for Peace will once more send medication, computers, bicycles, clothing, vehicles, and more. While in Cuba, U.S. citizens will also participate in a U.S./Cuba Conference to run workshops on Cuban relations and practice more solidarity work.

As for the potential penalty for violating the blockade, the caravanners do not fret. As Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote in *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, with reference to Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas: "... one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law Any law that degrades human personality is unjust."

Calendar of Events



August 1998

Saturday, August 1

Committee for the 50th Anniversary of the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights, 10 A.M., Fresno Center for Nonviolence.

Sunday, August 2–Friday, August 7

California School Employees annual conference, Sacramento.

Saturday, August 8

Visitors' Day, Sun Mountain, 10 A.M.–4 P.M. Guided tours of the Sun House, grounds, and passive solar center. Learn about herbology, gardening, and shamanic medicine. Call George (Elfie) Ballis at 855-3710 or check out : www.psnw.com/~sunmt/chronicles.html.

Fresno Center for Nonviolence Board Meeting, 9:30 A.M., 985 N. Van Ness. All welcome. Call 237-3225.

Saturday, August 8 & Sunday, August 9

Paraeducator Conference, for individuals interested in instructional aide issues, Sacramento. Will focus on education issues affecting aides including developing classroom skills, sharing instructional resources, and career ladder opportunities. Call 226-4200 for details.

Sunday, August 9

Democratic Socialists of America, 2 P.M. Call 221-8568 for more information.

Tuesday, August 11

Nonviolent Response to Personal Assault, Fresno Center for Nonviolence: 6:30 P.M., potluck; 7:30, video and discussion. Call Mary Hilpert, 432-8507.

Saturday, August 15

Deadline for submission of information for September issue of *Labor/Community Alliance*. Call 226-0477.

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 10 A.M., Fresno Center for Nonviolence. Call 229-9661.

Monday, August 17

Amnesty International, 7:30 P.M., Fresno Center for Nonviolence, 985 N. Van Ness. Call 224-0924.

Tuesday, August 18

Central California Citizens Copwatch Committee, 7 P.M., St. Ignacio's Church hall, 790 N. Jackson (north of Belmont, east of Maple). Call 265-7193.

Health Care for All, 7 P.M., Fresno Center for Nonviolence. Call 855-2438 for information.

Thursday, August 20

Death Penalty Focus, 7:30 P.M., Fresno Center for Nonviolence, 985 N. Van Ness. Call 323-4871.

Tuesday, August 25

ACLU, 7 P.M., Fresno Center for Nonviolence.

Wednesday, August 26

Central Labor Council, 6 P.M., UFCW/SEIU offices. Call 275-1151 for details.

Friday, August 28

Street Heat, 5–6 P.M., KFCF 88.1-FM. Featuring Central Valley labor/community activists.

Saturday, August 29

Political Action Kick-off, Visalia. Hosted by California School Employees Association Fresno Field Office to focus on fall campaign to work for Gray Davis and targeted state legislature races.

Poetry Benefit for Andres Montoya, Arte Americas, 1630 Van Ness. Call 266-22623 for details.

Monday, August 31

Labor/Community Alliance/Jobs with Justice, 5:30 P.M., Fresno Center for Nonviolence. Call 226-0477.

Ongoing Activities/Programs

Street Heat, Fourth Friday, 5–6 P.M., KFCF 88.1-FM. Featuring Central Valley labor/community activists.

Scalzo Talk, Mon & Thurs 6–9 P.M., KAAT 103.1-FM. A radio program for unions, about unions. Interviews with local people on labor and political issues.

Every Friday: 9 A.M.–2 P.M., Mexican Consulate, 830 Van Ness. A coalition of groups will gather to put pressure on the Mexican government to allow people the right to vote, calling for peace in Chiapas and to stop U.S. military intervention in Mexico.

Every Saturday: Food 'Not Bombs feeds the hungry; 1–2 P.M. near the Olive Avenue entrance to Roeding Park. **Needed: volunteers to help cook food Saturday mornings**, 9:30, Sierra Vista United Methodist church, corner of Maple & Illinois.

Nonviolent response to personal assault

Gandhi called it "Truth Force." Martin Luther King, Jr., called it "Soul Force." Jesus and Dorothy Day advocated the "Love your Enemy" philosophy. We call it nonviolence. Nonviolence is not synonymous with passivity, capitulation or neutrality. The nonviolent person is active, courageous and takes risks. We need to actively create—by our responses—a situation in which the assailant can re-choose what he wants to do. Join us August 11 at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence for a potluck, video, and discussion of nonviolence.

Fresno Bee, cont. from page 1

awarding of overtime work and promotions, downsizing, restrictions on vacation time, the exploitation of apprentices, ignored grievances, and—when the workers began unionizing—intimidation, coercion, and veiled threats.

When the newspaper saw that its workers wanted to join a union to attain better working conditions, management chose to battle its workforce with a barrage of scare tactics and lies rather than allow employees the opportunity to make their own decision.

Organizers Marty Keegan of Graphic Communications Union Local 404 (pressroom) and Bob Marshall of the Teamsters (packaging and distribution) found themselves outnumbered two to one by union-busters hired by *The Fresno Bee*. The union-busters were paid to manufacture fear. Employees were called into meetings with the union-busters one at a time and told that their jobs could be in jeopardy if the workers voted for the union.

Publisher Keith Moyer sent a letter to the homes of several employees which stated that a union victory "could affect you and your family's security." Dave Otero, an outspoken union advocate who has worked in the pressroom since 1984, was disgusted when his sister who works in packaging and distribution was warned in a suggestive manner that his union

activity could affect her job. The lows to which *The Fresno Bee* was willing to sink and the money they were willing to throw away to keep workers from having a union seemed endless.

In the face of *The Fresno Bee's* anti-union tactics, however, these courageous workers have been able to transcend the threats and see through the lies. Workers in other departments at *The Fresno Bee* who wish to improve their working conditions should view the efforts of the pressroom and packaging and distribution employees as models. Their kind of perseverance—along with tremendous community support—is just what is going to be required from the newspaper's many workers if *The Fresno Bee* is to ever be unionized entirely. And then *The Fresno Bee* can get on with what should be its business: publishing newspapers, not busting unions.

Jobs with Justice Pledge

I'll be there . . .

- standing up for our rights as working people to a decent standard of living.
- supporting the right of all workers to organize and bargain collectively.
- fighting for secure family-wage jobs in the face of corporate attacks on working people and our communities.
- organizing the unorganized to take aggressive action to secure a better economic future for all of us.
- mobilizing those already organized to join the fight for jobs with justice.

During the next year, I'll be there at least five times for someone else's fight, as well as my own. If enough of us are there, we'll all start winning.

Signature _____ Date _____

Your Name (please print) _____

Union Name/Local Number or Organization _____

Home Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Area Code/Day Phone _____ Area Code/Evening Phone _____

Fax _____ E-mail _____

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- ☐ Yes! Put me on the "Volunteers for Justice/Emergency Response Network" contact list. Alert me when there's a picket line, street action, phone bank, etc. for labor rights and social justice.

Name _____

Union/Organization _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

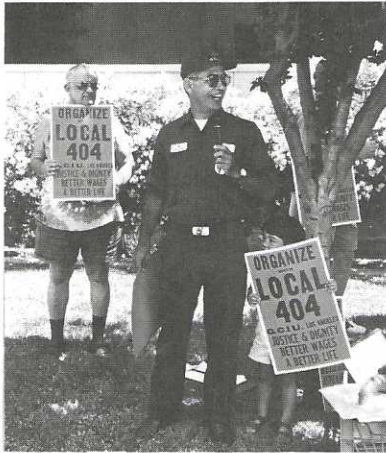
Phone: Home _____ Work _____

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Victory at The Bee

All employees will benefit



Joe Aguirre from the pressroom speaking at a support rally in front of the Bee.

The workers in *The Fresno Bee* pressroom and Graphic Communications International Union (GCIU) Local 404 won a significant victory on Thursday, July 23. Pressroom employees voted 17-14 to affiliate with GCIU. The company attempted to sneak two supervisors in to vote, but those ballots were contested. Even with the supervisors' votes, the union/employees would still have won.

The victory in the pressroom is proof that when employees join together to defend their rights they can win. *The Bee* used many of the techniques (see story, page 6B) used in the Packaging and Distribution Department to confuse and demoralize workers in the pressroom, but it didn't work.

Pressroom employees understand their rights. They weren't fooled when the company bosses and consultants attacked the union day after day. They understood they had a right to organize the union, and will now begin bargaining for a contract that will improve their working conditions. This is the message that scares the hell out of *Fresno Bee* management! Employees in all departments now know that it is possible to win union representation. Organizing throughout the company will be intensified.

The company is not about to roll over and play dead. They still have many tricks up their sleeves. For example, in the Advertising Department last December, they unilaterally cut employee salaries by 10 percent. Now, faced with a union drive in that department, they are giving employees bonuses. Management in advertising has suddenly become kinder and gentler, asking employees what can be done to make their working lives better. When they are not killing people with kindness, they are busy harassing and threatening union supporters. But most employees will see through management's smoke screen and understand that the union has already given them a salary increase and improved working conditions. Just imagine how much better things will be when employees in that department have a contract!

It won't be easy to unionize the entire *Fresno Bee*, but the victory in the pressroom is an inspiration to everyone and a giant step in that direction. The Labor/Community Alliance salutes the workers in the pressroom and the GCIU, and

encourages employees to make a call to the people in the "Let's Organize" box next to this article.

Now that the election is behind them the pressmen have extended their hand in friendship to their co-workers who voted against the union. Everyone knows that now is the time for unity, working together, and negotiating a contract that will benefit all pressroom employees.

Statement from the Newspaper Guild at The Fresno Bee

Jim Wasserman, Co-Chair, Newspaper Guild at The Fresno Bee

Twenty-four years ago the newsroom employees organized themselves a union this way, too. It wasn't easy then, to hear the old-timers tell it, and it obviously isn't easy to organize one now. But those of us who benefit from these early and successful Guild organizing efforts know it was worth it.

This many years later we have the legal rights to negotiate working conditions and have a union rep present during disputes with managers. That is no small thing. We have it now because people stuck their necks out when sticking your neck out was dangerous. It hasn't always been easy since, but we're very much here and growing in strength.

Simply put, we don't buy it that unions are about protecting slackers. Many of the best and hardest-working, most talented and conscientious people in the newsroom are members of the Newspaper Guild.

Let's Organize Who to Contact

Marty Keegan

Director of Organizing
Graphic Communications Union Local 404
518 West Duarte Road
Monrovia, CA 91016 (626) 357-6476

Chuck Davis

Northern California Mailers' Union Local 15
1780 Whipple Road, Suite 103
Union City, CA 94587
(510) 487-1386, 487-1388

Mike Rhodes

Communications Workers of America Local 9408
130 W. Shields Ave.
Fresno, CA 93705
248-9408, 226-0477 (home)

Intimidation, fear and company lies lead to defeat in Packaging & Distribution

Why did employees in *The Fresno Bee's* packaging and distribution (P&D) department vote 52-38 against union representation? P&D employees make just over minimum wage, they work part time, and they have very few benefits. It would appear they have everything to gain and nothing to lose by joining the union.

The most important factor in the union's loss was the relentless campaign by *The Fresno Bee* to defeat the union. *The Bee* immediately hired a team of expensive, high-powered union busters who turned the P&D department into what many employees called "a war zone."

The employees were told lie after lie by their managers and the union busters. They were told that if the union won they would be forced to go on strike. If they went on strike, they were told, they would be immediately replaced. Workers were also told that if they went on strike at *The Bee* they would have to strike at any other job they had. They were told that the unions dues were high, they would be forced to pay initiation fees of hundreds of dollars, and they would be assessed fines by the union for minor infractions. These are all lies and scare tactics carefully calculated to confuse and scare P&D employees.

The Fresno Bee was willing to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars (we were told the figure is close to \$500,000) to the union busting "consultants" to avoid raising employees' salaries. These consultants engaged in a ruthless campaign of threats and intimidation against union supporters. Employees were forced to attend closed-door meetings with management and the consultants. These meetings sometimes lasted an hour or more and some employees had to attend these interrogation sessions six or seven times.

I can just hear the questions now: "I thought you liked working here. We always thought you had a future at *The Fresno Bee*." Vague threats and intimidation were the order of the day at *The Fresno Bee*. Letters from Keith Moyer, publisher, were sent to P&D employees' homes saying that if the union won the election it "could affect you and your family's security."

One union supporter was removed from his workstation and forced to work alone. When he talked to his co-workers during a break or at lunch, the union busters would have that person brought before them for an interrogation. After a while, people became hesitant to talk for fear of retaliation.

The union busters worked behind the scenes telling managers what to say and do. The managers began to listen to employees' problems and complaints. Employees were told over and over again that if they would just give the company one more chance things would be better.

By the time P&D voted, the employees were so beaten up that they just wanted it to be over. Many of them were confused by the company's lies and scared they would lose their jobs if they voted for the union. Some of them honestly believed that management at *The Bee* had seen the error of its

ways and things would be better. That's how *The Fresno Bee* got employees in P&D to vote against their own best interests.

The list of lies, illegal labor practices, threats, and intimidation goes on and on, not just in P&D but wherever people are organizing at *The Bee*. The Labor/Community Alliance encourages the unions involved to file charges with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). It is only when union busting/anti-labor companies like *The Fresno Bee* are exposed that things will begin to improve.

We understand that approximately 20 charges have been filed in the P&D department alone! If the NLRB finds that *The Bee* has blatantly disregarded the law, they could award the election to the union. Alternatively, the NLRB could demand that a new election be held in which *The Fresno Bee* would be forced to obey the law and allow the workers in P&D to have a fair and democratic election.

Whatever the outcome of the charges facing *The Fresno Bee*, one thing is certain. Organizing in the P&D center and the rest of *The Bee* is far from over. The union will be there to show workers in P&D how many of the promises management made are left unfulfilled. Union organizing is taking place in nearly every department at *The Fresno Bee*. Any company that treats its employees with such disrespect should not be surprised when workers unite and start to build a union.

The truth will come out

A message from Chuck Davis, Secretary-Treasurer, Teamsters Local 15
I am writing this to let people know that we are still pondering the next move on the vote taken in the packaging and distribution department at *The Fresno Bee* on July 17. Although the people have cast their ballots, there are still a number of unfair labor practices we feel the company committed, and we are conferring with our lawyers to see what action we will take next.

We knew going into this election that McClatchy was determined to take whatever steps were necessary to keep people from having one united voice. They did a lot of what we expected, and also showed how afraid they are of people looking for help to stop being mistreated, harassed and bullied, when they are only looking to make a living. From the hiring of "union busters" to threaten, intimidate, lie to and interrogate people, to the never-ending stream of promises of what a better life employees would have if they voted NO, management pulled out all the stops to combat organizing efforts.

After the employees have seen the "window dressing" changes that are made, will they really believe? Believe a management that said: "We didn't know that was happening, you should have brought that up to us," and all the other things that shocked the current management team that is hired to make sure those things don't happen?

A couple of things come to mind. Under the "Act" the company has a right to manage, and also the right to mismanage. They seem to do a better job at the latter. The other is the old labor saying: "Only places that need unions have them." If ever a place needed a union, it's *The Fresno Bee*.

Nike mobilization



who are organizing activities in their cities. They will also be consulting with organizations in other parts of the globe to see whether our counterparts would like to make this an international event.

The purpose of this mobilization, as with those in April 1998 and October 1997, is to keep up the heat on Nike so that the company will address the core demands of the Nike campaign. More than ever, Nike is now highly vulnerable to consumer pressure. We have come a long way in spreading awareness. It is important to let Nike's top executives know that we remain committed to winning basic rights for the company's Asian shoe workers.

The fall action takes place during a week-long national action organized by the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights. The NNIRR has called for this action to protest the increasing rate of raids by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS, also known to many as "La Migra"). Immigration, by either documented or undocumented workers, is often a result of economic policies promoted by the U.S. government. The Labor/Community Alliance would like to see labor and community activists working together on this issue.

Campaign for Labor Rights will put together a special action packet for the October Nike mobilization. They will start making it available about one month before the event. The packet, which will be in hard copy, will include a leaflet master. If you are interested in working on this project, call Mike Rhodes at the Labor/Community Alliance, 226-0477.

The third Nike mobilization will take place Saturday, October 17, 1998. Campaign for Labor Rights will assist local contacts in the United States

Get up, stand up for human rights

by Ellie Bluestein, *Women's International League for Peace & Freedom*

This year the world will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This historic document provides the basis for the world's human rights programs. It has become a common gauge by which governments measure their progress, a standard to which all can be held, and a goal to which all people should aspire. Yet not many of us have read the document or thought about the implications of its promises.

On United Nations Day, October 24, the community of Fresno will celebrate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with a conference at Fresno City College starting at 9:30 A.M. and concluding at 3:30 P.M. There will be workshops on the rights of women, children, immigrants, labor, prisoners; the right to economic security and to equality and freedom from discrimination. The workshops will be led by experts in each field, and there will be a keynote address by Ann Fagan Gigner, of the Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute. The purpose of this celebration is to inform ourselves about this important document and its relevance to our lives, to recognize individuals who have been defenders of human rights throughout the world as well as in our own community, and to figure out how we as individuals can stand up for human rights.

The Fresno organizing committee is soliciting sponsorships from organizations throughout the community. Let us know of organizations that can be sponsors. Come to our next organizing meeting on Saturday, August 1, at 10 A.M. at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence. Call us at 224-0924 or 229-9807 for information. We have videos and educational materials that can be used to inform groups about the Declaration of Human Rights.



Substitute teachers and SEIU 535 members rallied on June 7 for a "Fair Daily Wage." The next week, the Fresno Unified School District voted a \$10/day raise for substitute teachers.

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Labor News

Don't undermine Social Security. "The debate over Social Security's future has veered in a dangerous direction," AFL-CIO President John Sweeney warned as the Clinton administration held its second town hall meeting on the retirement system's future. Diverting a portion of Social Security income into privatized retirement accounts "would exact a high price from working families. Most privatization plans would pay for individual accounts by drastically raising the age at which workers can collect full retirement benefits and by severely cutting guaranteed benefits," he said. Outside the meeting, 100 members of the National Council of Senior Citizens rallied against privatization. "We are tired of hearing people talk about the need to fix Social Security by turning it over to Wall Street privateers," said John Marvin, NCSC New England director. (*Work in Progress*)

Union, City by City. Hundreds of union members and their community allies will meet in Chicago July 31 through August 2 for a national conference on new tactics and local strategies to boost organizing, mobilization and political action to win economic justice. Union, City by City will give labor councils, local and international unions and their community partners a chance to share ideas and struggles and map out new strategies. Fresno's Randy Ghan and Don Hunsucker will be attending.



UAW strike update, from Michael Moore. Some comments about the United Auto Workers strike against General Motors in Flint, Mich., from Michael Moore's web site: www.dogeatdogfilms.com:

- General Motors has eliminated 50,000 jobs in Flint. That's 20,000 more than

when I made "Roger & Me." During the last five years, GM has made a net profit of \$27.5 billion, yet they continue to downsize. They are in the process of removing every GM job from Flint. Nationwide, GM has fired over half its workforce in recent years—that's 250,000 people made jobless. This strike is not just about Flint and GM. Numerous companies plan to continue their slash and burn policies, even in the face of one of the strongest economies ever. This is greed in its purest form.

- Pro-industry analysts are saying that GM needs to cut even more jobs to be more productive and remain competitive. They point to how Ford and Chrysler got rid of thousands back in the '80s. The reason Ford and Chrysler are doing better is because, unlike GM, they are building better cars that people want to drive.

Want an example as to why Ford is more productive than GM? (Reader Alert: I am about to say something nice about a CEO.) Last year, Johnson Controls, which builds seats for Ford vehicles, was struck by the UAW. Johnson Controls then fired everyone and hired "replacement," or scab, workers. Alex Trotman, the CEO of Ford, told Johnson Controls that he would not accept any seats made by scab workers. The message to Johnson Controls was, "You sit down and bargain in good faith with your workers and come to an agreement. You are not to fire them or replace them. You are to treat them with respect." Ford then shut down the assembly line for its most popular-selling vehicle, the Ford Expedition, for two weeks until Johnson Controls settled the strike and started producing union-made seats again.

What do you think that does for the morale of the typical Ford worker? Maybe when management treats you with respect and dignity, you are more productive? Maybe this explains why Ford has not had a walkout in 20 years and GM has had 23 since 1992?

To support the striking workers, send letters and contributions to:

Local 659 UAW, 4549 Van Slyke Rd., Flint, MI 48507

Duane Zuckschwerdt, Pres. **Fax:** (810) 232-8348

Local 651 UAW, 3518 Robert T. Long Way, Flint, MI 48506

Danny Thetford, Pres. **Fax:** (810) 742-9090

Sweatshop exhibit has no place to go. The Smithsonian Institution will not be taking its sweatshop exhibit on the road because it can't find enough museums interested in displaying it. Museums in San Francisco, Chicago and New York turned it down, and the Smithsonian decided not to display it at Cal State L.A. because shipping would be too costly for a one-city show. This decision is a public relations coup for the apparel industry, which had opposed the exhibit depicting conditions in an El Monte sweatshop that was raided by authorities in 1995. California Labor Commissioner Jose Millan, who participated in the raid, expressed disappointment. "I think the exhibit is fair and balanced and of benefit to the apparel industry. It was an opportunity to educate the public about industry problems." (*George White, Los Angeles Times*)

Attention teachers!

Global Sweatshop Curriculum Packet

- 60 pages of useful information
- for grades 4-12

- presents global economics in concrete terms

\$15

Send check or money order to:

Labor/Community Alliance, P.O. Box 5077, Fresno CA 93755

Steelworkers file suit to repeal NAFTA

by Larry Langford, Labor/Community Alliance

The United Steelworkers of America (USWA) has filed suit in the U.S. District Court in Alabama challenging the constitutionality of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The suit contends that NAFTA is actually a treaty between the United States and several foreign governments, and as such must meet the constitutional requirement of ratification by a two-thirds majority vote in the Senate.

When the Senate voted to approve the trade agreement on Nov. 17, 1993, it was by a vote of 61-38, several votes short of the two-thirds majority. The steelworkers are joined in their suit by the Made in the USA Foundation, a non-profit organization whose 60,000 members represent both corporate and union interests.

According to USWA figures, more than half a million jobs have been lost in the United States since NAFTA went into effect. The U.S. Department of Labor has certified that more than 7,400 members of the steelworkers union have lost jobs because employers have moved their operations to Canada or Mexico. In addition, the Labor Department has certified more than 187,000 other workers nationwide who have suffered the same fate.

USWA President George Becker recently traveled to Mexico to see first-hand the economic devastation the trade agreement has brought to that country. Nearly 20 percent of Mexican workers receive less than minimum wage, and 66 percent receive no benefits whatsoever. To make matters worse, government and corporate opposition to union organization is quite strong. "It is clear to me," said Becker, "that the mechanisms set up under NAFTA to prevent labor abuse simply don't work." Becker went on to denounce the trade agreement, calling for "a trading system that recognizes workers as central to the economy and allows people to earn enough to buy the goods they produce."

The steelworkers' suit contends that the word "treaty," as used in the Constitution, does not merely refer to those agreements that establish military alliances or end conflicts. The Constitution, they say, also recognizes what are called "treaties of commerce," of which NAFTA would be an example, therefore making it subject to constitutional requirements for ratification. The suit was filed in Alabama because it had been demonstrated that workers there had been directly harmed by the implementation of the trade agreement.



Tune in! Street Heat, every fourth Friday, 5-6 P.M., KFCF 88.1-FM. Features Central Valley labor/community activists!



On July 2, Stan Santos, Angel Noriega, and Arturo Garcia

launched the Campaign for Peace in Mexico.

Support the campaign every Friday from 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. in front of the Mexican Consulate's office, 830 Van Ness.

The Top Ten

10 best reasons for new Congressional leadership

- ① **So Newt Gingrich won't be two heartbeats away from becoming president.** After Bill and Al, Newt's next in line for the Oval Office. It's scary.
- ② **So we can give Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport its old name.** Naming the airport after the president who launched a new era of union busting when he fired air traffic controllers is an insult to every union member.
- ③ **So the Speaker's gavel can be used by someone who doesn't throw tantrums.**
- ④ **So American public education and student loans won't be sacrificed to provide tax breaks** to guys like Microsoft CEO Bill Gates and Nike CEO Phil Knight. The Republican leadership thinks public education is "destroying children."
- ⑤ **So Social Security won't be turned over to Wall Street.**
- ⑥ **So after four years of playing defense, workers can play offense on labor-rights issues.** The last four years have produced the most anti-union, anti-worker Congress in half a century. It's been a nightmare.
- ⑦ **So the principle that the polluter pays isn't changed to "everybody but the polluter pays."**
- ⑧ **So Medicare doesn't become a wholly owned subsidiary of the AMA.** If the AMA-backed Kyl bill passes, doctors will be able to tack a big fat surcharge on their Medicare bills. Most seniors won't be able to pay.
- ⑨ **So Congress will stop slamming the door on workers with repetitive motion injuries.** This Congress is in the pocket of anti-worker businessmen who hate occupational health and safety laws.
- ⑩ **On account of El Niño.**

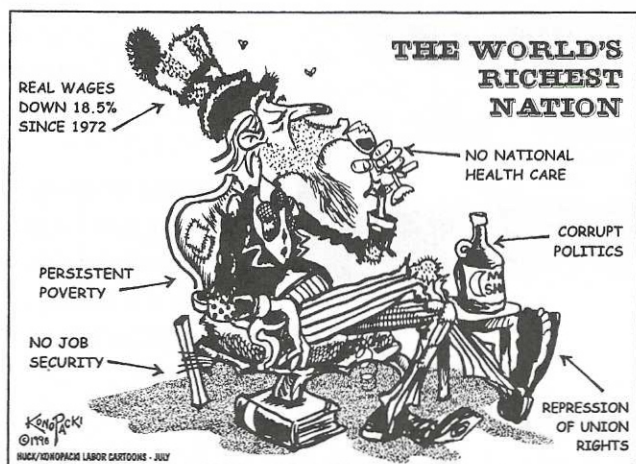
(from the UAW web site: uaw.org/solidarity)

Labor/Community Alliance

P.O. Box 5077

Fresno, CA 93755

• Address Correction Requested •



HK JULY 1998

World's 200 richest tighten grip

by Martin McLaughlin

The U.S. business magazine *Forbes* released its annual list of the wealthiest people on the planet June 21. The 200 individuals (and a few families) on the list control an aggregate of more than \$1 trillion in wealth, an average of \$5 billion apiece.

These 200 have a personal wealth roughly equal to the Gross Domestic Product of France, and greater than the GDP of all but five countries in the world (U.S., China, Japan, India and Germany).

Three of the top five are Americans: William Gates of Microsoft, who tops the list at \$51 billion; the Walton family, sons and daughters of the late Wal-Mart founder Sam Walton, whose cheap-labor empire is worth \$48 billion; and Warren Buffett, the most successful stock market speculator, whose investments are valued at \$33 billion. The other two are oil sheiks: Hassan-al Bolkihah, the Sultan of Brunei; and King Fahd of Saudi Arabia.

There are profound social and political issues posed by these figures. Such immense accumulations of wealth are in sharp contrast to the appalling poverty afflicting the majority of the human race. What could \$1 trillion do if put to use to serve social needs rather than private profits?

The assets controlled by the 200 wealthiest individuals are greater than the Gross Domestic Product of the entire continent of Africa, home to 600 million people. Millions of children in Africa die prematurely for lack of access to clean drinking water or because of the unavailability of medical treatments costing only a few pennies per patient.

These figures provide an irrefutable answer to the arguments of the apologists for reaction who claim that it is impossible to feed

the hungry, house the homeless, treat the sick or provide for those in need because "there is no money." The assets of the Microsoft billionaires are greater than the total federal spending on all U.S. poverty programs. Gates' wealth alone is greater than the budgets for welfare and food stamps combined.

What becomes of democracy when such a tiny fraction of the population controls such a massive proportion of society's resources? Can it seriously be believed that the government of the United States, or of any other capitalist country, serves the interests of the majority of the population, rather than the interests of those who control the majority of the wealth? What will be the attitude of the government to a challenge from below to the grotesque inequality in the distribution of wealth?

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