

Labor/Community ALLIANCE

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JUNE 1999

IS FRESNO READY FOR A LIVING WAGE?

by Mike Rhodes

Since 1994, when an effective alliance between labor and religious leaders in Baltimore launched a successful campaign for a living wage measure, strong community, labor, and religious coalitions have fought for and won at least twenty similar ordinances in cities such as Boston, Los Angeles, San Jose, Portland, Milwaukee, Detroit, Minneapolis, and Oakland. Today, more than two dozen living wage campaigns are underway in cities across the country, giving rise to what may now rightfully be considered the national living wage movement, which syndicated columnist Robert Kuttner has described as "the most interesting (and under reported) grassroots enterprise to emerge since the civil rights movement ... which signals a resurgence of local activism around pocketbook issues."

In short, living wage campaigns seek to pass local ordinances requiring private businesses that benefit from public money to pay their workers a living wage. Commonly, the ordinances cover employers who hold large city or county service contracts or receive substantial financial assistance from the city in the form of grants, loans, bond financing, tax abatements, or other economic development subsidies.

The concept behind any living wage campaign is simple: Our limited public dollars should not be subsidizing poverty-wage work. When subsidized employers are allowed to pay their workers less than a living wage, tax payers end up footing a double bill: the initial subsidy and then the food stamps, emergency medical, housing and

other social services low wage workers may require to support themselves and their families even minimally. Public dollars should be leveraged for the public good — reserved for those private sector employers who demonstrate a commitment to providing decent, family-supporting jobs in our local communities.

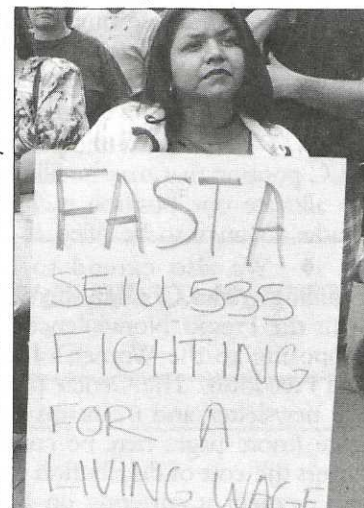
Many campaigns have defined the living wage as equivalent to the poverty line for a family of four, which is about \$10.00 an hour, with some newer campaigns pushing for even higher wages.

Increasingly, living wage coalitions are proposing other community standards in addition to a wage requirement, such as health benefits, vacation days, community hiring goals, public disclosure, community advisory boards, environmental standards, and language that supports union organizing.

On April 30 in Fresno, a group of members of the Labor/Community Alliance and about a dozen other local groups met to hear a presentation by Brian Kettenring of ACORN. The group decided to conduct a feasibility study among key Fresno area organizations for a local campaign. Initial response has been very positive and a steering committee is being formed to develop a time line, budget, and organizational structure to carry out the campaign.

All Fresno City Council members have been contacted about their support of a Living Wage ordinance and it looks as though we may have majority support. Response so far from City Council:

"I believe in a living wage for the citizens of Fresno. I also feel that citizens should earn a living wage in order to purchase a vehicle and a home. Citizens should also have access to health benefits to help protect their families from costly medical bills.



Fresno Substitute Teachers Union

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EDITORIAL

Last month we informed our readers of the letter we received from the Coalition of Organized Labor (COOL) and request by the Central Labor Council proposing changes in this newsletter's editorial board. We printed that letter in last month's newsletter and set up a meeting to discuss the proposal on May 8. Below is The Labor/Community Alliances' response to the proposal:

The membership of the Labor/Community Alliance met on May 8 and reached a consensus on our response to your requests. Our group feels that it is of strategic importance that the editorial board reflects the diversity of those involved in the Labor/Community Alliance, of those who donate countless hours to the production of the newsletter, and of the financial contributors of the project.

Our total cost of production is over \$20,000 annually, the bulk of which is provided by volunteers. The printer's discount, grants, and advertising are the next largest sources of income. Individual unions, community groups and subscribers each account for less than 5% of the overall resources needed to produce the newsletter.

Organizations that are formally or informally involved in the newsletter and other Labor/Community Alliance projects include a broad range of social justice, civil rights, and religious organizations; all of which are eager to find a democratic and inclusive venue to join with organized labor to fight for economic and social justice in the San Joaquin Valley.

We therefore propose a more formal structure to insure meaningful input from all sectors. We propose the following:

- ♦ To increase our current editorial board from seven members to nine. Current members would continue to serve - they represent labor, community and religious groups as well as those most involved in production.

- ♦ To designate the position held by Randy Ghan as a CLC position that may be filled at the discretion of the CLC. To allocate one position each for COOL and the Building Trades Council to be filled at their discretion.

- ♦ We also extend to the CLC, COOL, and the Building Trades Council the same arrangement that we have with the Fresno Nonviolence Center (and we are currently proposing to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom). The Center pays \$100 a month for a page in the newsletter; and maintains total editorial control over that page (more pages may be commissioned). The Center also covers the cost of distribution to their own membership. This arrangement is currently on a trial basis.

Clearly organized labor's collaboration with this project is an opportunity to use a very small financial investment to reach thousands of members and potential members with our program for increasing workers' power. We suggest that we enter a six-month trial period after which we can evaluate our progress.

We hope that this proposal will meet everyone's needs to facilitate meaningful input, to provide an inclusive structure, and to move our work forward toward building a broad coalition to fight for workers rights.

Organize for Social and Economic Justice Be a Community Organizer with ACORN A Job You Can Really Believe In

ACORN is seeking persons with an interest in social justice, a passion for social change, and a commitment to organizing poor and working class and communities of color to apply for positions as a community organizer. Women, people of color, and bilingual persons are strongly encouraged to apply. Interested persons may call Brian at California ACORN at (510) 436-5690 or email: caacornok@acorn.org.

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LABOR/COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

The Labor/Community Alliance is building a coalition of organized labor and progressive community groups to fight for economic and social justice for working people in Fresno and the Central San Joaquin Valley. The Labor/Community Alliance is affiliated nationally with Jobs with Justice. This newsletter is published monthly.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR



While the decision of the FUSD school board to reject the takeover of Bethune Elementary to the Edison Project was a step in the right direction, and a clear statement against the privatization of our public schools, the work to improve the education of Bethune students must still occur. The focus of the community and the school board has highlighted the unacceptably low test scores of Bethune students, and teachers and parents want some hope that things will improve. There are numerous reform plans available to the District, and it will take continuing commitment to put something into action. Meanwhile, it looks like the Edison Project has not given up. They've secured the support of Fresno County Superintendent Pete Mehas and are seeking approval of their Charter by either Mehas or the State Department of Education.

Should the County or the State run the school, many complications to Edison's plans will arise. My questions are these: would employees at the new Charter be FUSD employees? Would they be covered by the Fresno Teacher's Association contract? How will FUSD negotiate the leasing of the facilities at Bethune? How can they be ready to open the school in late August 1999?

Any action to convert Bethune Elementary to a Charter School will need to be made in Sacramento by June 2. It is unclear whether it is the Edison Project who will file the appeal, or whether the Bethune teachers will reaffirm their commitment to Edison by appealing the decision to the County or State. I would think it must be a decision of Bethune, which would then be carried out by Edison.

Sandy Iyall

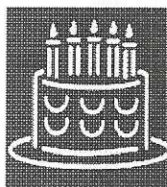
Teacher at Bethune Elementary
Member, Fresno Teacher Association

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, MANNY!

by Maria Telesco

Some things we say by rote. To "How are you?" we respond "Fine" even when we're not, and "Have a nice day" even if it isn't. How about "Happy Birthday?"

May 3rd was Manuel Babbitt's 50th and last birthday. The Sovereign State of California decreed its minions should murder the birthday boy at one minute after midnight. Preparing to conduct a vigil on the steps of St. John's Cathedral, assembling picket



signs, photocopying hymns, hoping and praying for a commutation that would never come, questions nagged at my mind: Did the Death House guards who would later strap him down and inject poison into his veins wish Manny a happy birthday when he woke up that morning? Did his family sing "Happy Birthday" when they came for their last visit? Did the warden's wife bake him a cake?

Manny left school at 17, after seventh grade. When he joined the Marines, a friend filled out his paperwork because Manny couldn't read or write. A paranoid schizophrenic, Babbitt served two tours in Viet Nam, saved the lives of several fellow Marines, was wounded and came home with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

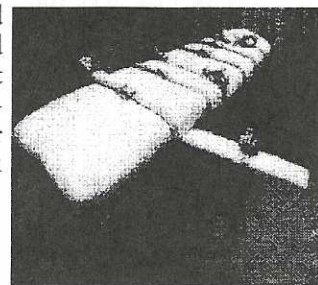
Growing progressively crazier, Manny had a "flashback" one day and attacked 78-year-old Leah Schendel, believing she was the "enemy." Ms. Schendel died of a heart attack caused by the beating. Manny's lawyer was an incompetent racist drunk, some say. Others said this never should have been a capital case because criminal intent was lacking. Just about everyone agreed Manny belonged in a mental hospital, if any of those were left.

He taught himself to read and write while on Death Row, turned his life around. He never collected his Purple Heart until last summer, when some Marines and veterans presented it to him at San Quentin. Manny was happy and proud, but some folks protested. He didn't deserve it, they said, because he was a condemned murderer.

In Fresno, we tried to get veterans' organizations to attend the vigil but they refused. "Too political," they said. But three different veterans' groups attended the vigil at San Quentin. What's "too political" in a/c 559 is "politically correct" in a/c 415.

Manny was deeply remorseful for the crime he didn't remember committing. Described as a kind and gentle man, a model prisoner, a threat to no one, he adjusted well to prison life, a perfect candidate for life without parole. Countless individuals and organizations pleaded for mercy that wouldn't be forthcoming. First the Governor, then the Supreme Court, said "No clemency" and Manny Babbitt became the first African-American executed in California since the resumption of murder by the state.

Manny fasted over the weekend and declined the ceremonial "last meal." Just a celebratory toast with a birthday cocktail of sodium amytal, pancuronium bromide and potassium chloride, and Manny Babbitt, Viet Nam hero, died ignominiously but with dignity at age 50 years and 37 minutes. Desist, his family had to beg for money so they could bury him back home in Rhode Island.



Happy Birthday, Manny!

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Boycott Wells Fargo

The Steelworkers Union is asking everyone who banks with Wells Fargo to change banks and close their accounts. Wells Fargo is bankrolling the union-busting activities of Oregon Steel in Pueblo, Colorado. Hundreds of strikers have been permanently replaced, and Wells Fargo continues to provide funds to the otherwise bankrupt company.

FRESNO CENTER FOR NONVIOLENCE

Center Report: June 1999

by Richard Stone

Featured event: Anniversary Celebration

Come Celebrate our 6th anniversary on Sunday, June 27th at 5:30 p.m. We will introduce our newly formed Honorary Board and giving our annual "Way of Peace"

Awards. Catering by Food Not Bombs. Official welcome home to Gerry and Zay, back from a semester in London.

Recent Successes: "Stylish Seconds" was a best-yet show, and along with generous support for the raffle and silent auction, raised over \$1900 for the Center. Congratulations to Angela and all her cohorts.

David Roche's one-person show, "The Church of 80% Sincerity" was a wonderfully witty and moving event. Attendance was disappointing (thanks in part to the Bee's glorious non-coverage), but we are proud of bringing this worthy performer to Fresno.

Patrick Young's Wheelchair Project (officially sponsored by the Center) became national news when Mexican Customs balked at allowing pencils and clothing in. Thanks to the lobbying of local and state politicians—especially Juan Arambula—and the prodding of many Fresno adherents, Patrick made it into Mexico. We'll schedule him to give a report on his trip in the near future.

On Going Events

Every "2nd Tuesday": Center Housekeeping followed by a potluck and Center-related conversation. This month (June 8), Annidelle Flint will be with us to talk about her work with the **Fresno Multifaith Exchange**—a discussion group with members of different religious orientations sharing their beliefs and practices. Clean-up brigade meets at 5:30; potluck at 6:00, program at 7:30.

While the Bombs Fall: Until we stop the horror in the Balkans, a vigil of conscience is being held every Monday at 5:30 p.m. at the SE corner of Shaw and First. BYOS (Bring your own sign)

Fresno Iraq Action Committee: Now in the back pages, the bombing and sanctioning of Iraq continues to cost thousands of lives. An education-and-action plan is being formulated. Committee meeting every Wed. evening, general meeting first Wed. at 7:30 p.m., Masjid Mosque (Shaw just east of Cedar) upstairs.

Coming Attractions

Hiroshima Day Commemoration: (August 6th) This year, we are organizing a car-pool to Livermore, to participate in their annual Action Day against the work at Lawrence Livermore Lab, where the next generation of nuclear weapons is being produced (under the Orwellian name of "Stockpile Stewardship"). Please let us know if you plan to join this one day excursion—with enough interest we could rent a van or bus. Leave message at 237-3225.

Newsletter Update: Thanks to contributions from Luisa Medina, Matilda Rangel, Angela Price, Valta Pointer, Barbara Nelson, Margaret Hudson and Ray Ensher, we have funds for 2 more months of this format (no "wrapper", no "mailing parties", much larger circulation). **Just \$5.00** from each of our subscribers would keep us going another year. *Can we get a little help from our friends?*

The Welch Report

13 May 1999

by Jack H. Welch, M.D.

Surprisingly, only two pieces of mail received at the Center this past month deal with the war in Yugoslavia.

Peaceful Action of the Chico Peace and Justice Center, April 1999, calls for ending the bombing of Kosovo: "Ordinary Serb and Kosovar citizens are the ones suffering from this conflict. We do not condone Serbia's atrocities toward the Albanian Kosovars, and Serbia's removal of autonomy for Kosovo" (in 1989). We oppose the continuation of a Serbian police state in Kosovo. By the same token, we cannot condone the actions taken by the Kosovo Liberation Army, from terrorism to outright war.

"We also do not condone the use of force by the US and its NATO surrogate in a vain attempt to stop the civil war in Serbia and Kosovo. Using war to stop war is not the answer. This situation... shows the need for the world to move in the direction of a democratically controlled UN police force able to defend UN humanitarian missions, and able to arrest international criminals such as the Serbian leader."

"In the short term we urge President Clinton and Congress to halt this bombing campaign... We urge Serbia and the KLA to agree to an immediate cease-fire. We urge the UN to bring humanitarian relief to Kosovo for the hundreds of thousands of innocent refugees. And we urge a renewal of intensive diplomatic effort by the world community, and especially by Russia, to convince Serbia to agree to a cease-fire and to negotiate in good faith. We urge that the embargo against Serbia be strengthened, and that the international community speaks as one in condemning atrocities and violence on all sides of this conflict... The world must find solutions to conflicts between, and within, countries that are non-violent ones."

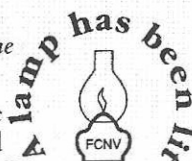
It appeared that negotiations between the West and President Milosevic were getting on track through the mediation of the Russians. Then, reportedly because of a tragic error by the CIA, the Chinese embassy in Belgrade was bombed by American pilots, to which that country has reacted violently with expected damage to the diplomatic process.

Moscow now is reporting the firing by President Yeltsin of Prime Minister Primakov, and the initiation of impeachment proceedings by the Russian Parliament against the President, which it is feared may impair Russia's further diplomatic efforts.

NATO's terms for ending this conflict appear to be correct ones:

The withdrawal of Serb forces from Kosovo, thereby allowing the return of Kosovars to their homes (many of which have been destroyed by Serb police and paramilitaries) under protection of an armed international force, together with Kosovar self-government (short of independence).

The UN must be involved in the peace process, even though the organization failed to bring an end to the war in Bosnia. As of day 50 of the NATO bombing campaign, one has to question seriously whether further bombing will hasten the ending of this tragic conflict.



Calendar of Events June 1999

Wednesday, June 2 Social Hour 5:30-6:30 PM and dinner at 6:30 PM

The California Latino Civil Rights Network Second Annual Honorary Dinner held at the Double Tree Hotel in Fresno. Honorees are Jessie De La Cruz and Lupita Lomeli. Call 498-7000.

Saturday, June 5 6:00 PM

Potluck and program starts at 7:30 PM *Pastors for Peace Caravan* with humanitarian aid for Cuba at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence, 985 N Van Ness. See article on page 9. Call 226-0477.

Saturday, June 5 5:30 - 10:00 PM

Dick Gregory, the brilliant comedian, a leading civil and human rights activist, recording artist, and a man committed to non-violent social change will be the keynote speaker at this Uninted Black Men of Fresno event at the Casablanca Banquet Hall, 2317 Toulumne St. Call 452-0749.

Saturday, June 5

Anti-War Demonstration in San Francisco. Contact the Emergency Mobilization to Stop the War-West Coast Office for more information (415) 821-6545.

Tuesday, June 8

Second Tuesday at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence, 985 N Van Ness. Annidelle Flint on "The Multifaith Exchange" (an ongoing learning exchange among followers of different religions). Call 237-3223.

Friday, June 11 7:30 PM

Matthew Lasar, Historian and author of *Pacific Radio: The Rise of an Alternative Network*. This event is sponsored by KFCF and The Fresno Free College Foundation and held at the Bonner Auditorium at 2233 N First Street in the Fresno Art Museum. Call 233-2221.

Tuesday, June 15

Deadline for submissions for the July issue of the Labor/Community Alliance Newsletter. Call 226-0477.

Tuesday, June 15 7:15 PM

Health Care for All meeting. Call Ray at 439-8140.

Thursday, June 17 7:30 PM

Death Penalty Focus meeting at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence. Call 323-4871.

Saturday, June 19 10-Noon

Sophia DeWitt will speak about reconciliation. Sophia DeWitt will speak about reconciliation. Ms DeWitt recently attended a seminar on the subject with Desmond Tutu of South Africa. The event will be at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence and is sponsored by WILPF. Call 229-9661 for more information.

Monday, June 21 7:30 PM

Amnesty International meeting at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence. Call 224-0924 for more information.

Friday, June 25 5 PM

Street Heat on KFCF 88.1 FM featuring labor/community activists.

Monday, June 28 6:30 PM

Labor/Community Alliance & Jobs with Justice monthly meeting at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence. Call 226-0477 for more information.

ONGOING ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS

Every Saturday 1-2 PM

Food Not Bombs feeds the hungry near the Olive Avenue entrance to Roeding Park. Volunteers are needed to help cook food Saturday mornings, 9:30 AM at Sierra Vista United Methodist Church, corner of Maple and Illinois. Donations of good or almost good produce can be dropped off also. They are always in need of servers at the park.

Every Monday 5:30 PM

Anti-War Demonstration. There will be an on-going demonstration (every Monday until the war ends) at the corner of Shaw and First street, half-way between the Serbian church and the Moslem Mosque. Participants will join hands and extend east on Shaw and south on First, reaching toward symbolic connection between the peoples in conflict. The hope is that enough people will eventually join to complete this human "rainbow", and to communicate the desire for genuine reconciliation through dialogue - not "peace" imposed by military strength that glorifies the might of the conquerors and humiliates the defeated. For more information contact Richard Stone at 266-2559 or Vincent Lavery at 439-0821. Background info: <http://www.greens.org/kosovo.html> <http://www.lbbs.org/ZMag/kosovo.htm>.

Every Tuesday and Thursday 7-9 PM *St. Benedict Catholic Worker* has been feeding the hungry in front of the Fresno County Jail (Fresno and M Sts.) for almost 2 years now. Volunteers are needed to help prepare the food on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons at 2 PM. The Catholic Worker is located at 4022 N. Cheryl Ave., Fresno (Cross streets are Marks and Ashlan). Volunteers are also needed to help serve in front of the jail. Donations of food are ALWAYS welcome. For further information call Bryan or Liza Apper at 229-6410.

Every Monday and Thursday 6-9 PM

Scalzo Talk A radio program for unions, about unions and to union people. A radio program with a union voice. Interviews of local people on labor issues and political issues that deal with the working people. KAAT 103.1 FM.

Every Wednesday 7:30 PM *Fresno Iraq Action Coalition* Oppose the bombings/sanctions against Iraq Meeting in the Mosque located at 2111 E. Shaw Ave. across from Fresno State. Details: 222-6686, <http://members.aol.com/IraqAction>

REPAYMENT OF IMMIGRANT FUNDS

from: *Latino Health News*



Funds unlawfully confiscated by the Department of Health Services (DHS) and the Immigration and Naturalization Services from immigrants who were forced to repay Medi-Cal health services lawfully obtained will be refunded.

Under the terms of *Rocio R. v. Belshe*, DHS must return approximately \$4 million it illegally collected from immigrants since March 1996.

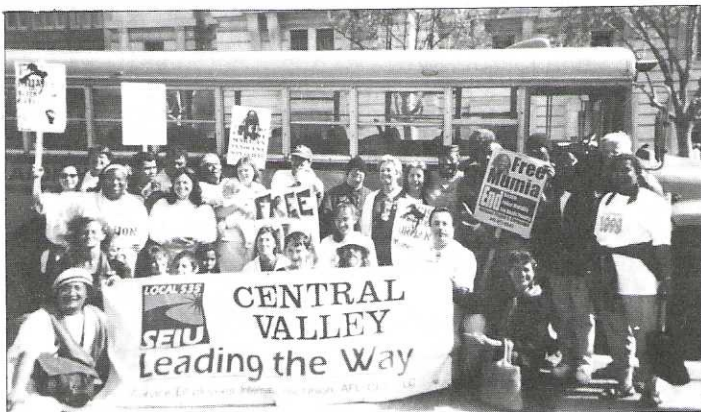
The DHS will send letters to affected immigrants informing them of their right to reclaim their money. Affected parties will have 180 days from the date of the notice to request repayment. In addition, DHS must also seek assistance from community-based organizations in identifying these immigrants. Out of over 1,000 notices that have been sent out to affected individuals, approximately 600 to date have returned a claim for their money.

If you know of any immigrants who may be eligible for this repayment, please encourage them to reclaim their money. For more information on how individuals can seek refunds, please contact **Rosemary Bishop** at the San Diego Friends of Legal Aid at (619) 233-7263.

RALLY TO FREE MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

by Jean Kennedy-Douglas
May 1999 WILPF Catalyst

A San Joaquin Coalition of social activists and organizations prepared the way for a large group of Fresnoans to attend the April 24th rally in San Francisco. Over 25,000 people turned out - union representatives, including the longshoremen, members of both the Oakland and San Francisco School Boards, and individuals such as Ann Fagen Ginger, members of Manuel Babbitt's family, and speakers Ed Asner and Angela Davis. "This was a great day for Human Rights. I strongly believe that the spirit...must continue until all people in this country are equally represented and given...due process in the Justice system. Special thanks go out to all those who joined in this effort...and to the WILPF chapter for your generous support."



Fresno Delegation Goes to Free Mumia Rally

SHAME, SHAME, SHAME GOVERNOR

by Gloria Hernandez

Governor Davis has chosen the middle road on Prop. 187. He has chosen mediation over litigation. Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamante is the first Latino official to break ranks with the Democratic governor over his decision. "This is a core issue of conscience." He said, "Prop. 187 is the center part of that mean spirited politics." Other Latino elected officials are preaching compromise stating that perhaps something can be salvaged to satisfy voters who passed Prop. 187 by a 59% majority. They say there is little to lose in mediation.

My question is, "Why must we resort to salvaging what should be rightfully ours?" Four of the law components were already found unconstitutional by U.S. District Court Judge Mariana Pfaelzer in a 1997 ruling because they are covered by federal laws or previous Supreme Court rulings. They include restrictions on public education, health care and welfare benefits, as well as requiring that teachers and police officers report suspected illegal immigrants. (Therefore, is the current Fresno Police Department's and Fresno County Sheriff's policy of calling "la Migra" whenever they confront someone who is undocumented and a non-criminal illegal policy?)

The only acceptable remaining portion of the ruling makes it illegal to manufacture or use false citizenship documents; a state felony. Now this, all of us can live with. Why then is Davis resorting to mediation when the possibility exists that any of the attorneys can kill the deal under federal mediation rules? The District Court has already suspended action on Prop 187 until June 19, allowing mediation to occur. If mediation does not work, then Davis again faces the question as to whether to pursue the Wilson appeal? What then?

El Comité ¡NO NOS VAMOS! Recently signed on to a letter signed by Latino, Asian and Black groups praising Bustamante for "standing tall for the rights of Californians" and a letter urging Gov. Davis to stop the tide of anti-immigrant sentiments in California by taking two actions:

Drop the appeal of Proposition 187 and rescind Governor Wilson's Executive Order. This order, issued in August 1996 by former Governor Wilson, requires administrative agencies to place immigrant screens and restrictions on applications in over 200 state programs. These burdensome screens have delayed services and caused harassment for all Californians, citizens and non-citizens alike. Time is of the essence for this request. Over 17 departments have already implemented immigrant verification regulations. Other departments have proposed regulations and are awaiting final approval. Each day the Executive Order is maintained, new anti-immigrant policies can be implemented without our knowledge or consent.

Previous governors have been sued by different groups. What is Gov. Davis afraid of? He should not have fear, not when Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamante and the people who came out and voted for him stand beside him. Shame on you, Gov. Davis, you broke our hearts, when you lied to us. Be compassionate and thus you will be strong.



Additionally, I would like to see more jobs provided in Fresno to increase the opportunity for people to have a choice in obtaining a better paying job." **District 1 - Tom Boyajian**

"I support a living wage, and am a strong supporter of using union labor for large public construction projects in the City of Fresno. My efforts to approve the \$20 million downtown train station and the Marks and Shaw underpass project will bring hundreds of union jobs to Fresno during the next three years." **District 2 - Christopher Mathys**

No response. **District 3 - Dan Ronquillo**

"I support the current collective bargaining process the city has in negotiating competitive wages for work performed by its employees. I believe the taxpayers need to know they are getting the best bang for their buck. I believe the current process does this." **District 4 - Ken Steitz**

"Yes" **District 5 - Sal Quintero**

"I would need more information and background on the living wage issue prior to answering the question." After receiving additional information from the Labor/Community Alliance we did not hear back from Mr. Bredefeld. **District 6 - Garry Bredefeld**

"I support City employees earning competitive wages and a good benefit plan. For the temporary workforce that we have, in addition to a competitive wage I would support a limited benefit package consisting primarily of health insurance." **District 7 - Henry Perea**

We asked each city council member: Would you support the City of Fresno paying a "Living Wage" to all of its employees? We defined a living wage as \$10 an hour. **If you are interested in working on the Living Wage Campaign call The Labor/Community Alliance at (559) 226-0477.**



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FRESNO COUNTY GREEN PARTY

OFFERS AN ALTERNATIVE TO POLITICS AS USUAL

by Mark Stout

Growing from a modest beginning in three nations that took root in 1972, there are now Green parties in over 78 countries. In the US, Greens have been organizing since 1984. US Greens have ten key values: Social Justice, Grassroots Democracy, Nonviolence, Ecology, Community-Based Economics, Decentralization, Sustainability, Feminism, Global Responsibility, and Respect for Diversity. A milestone for the national movement was when the Green Party of California achieved ballot status in 1992 by registering over 100,000 voters. We are currently celebrating the historic victory of Audie Bock to the 16th Assembly District in Oakland, the first US Green candidate elected to state office, and the first third-party California Assembly win since 1917.

Fresno shows incredible potential for a high quality of life, with a sunny climate, affordable housing, a fine community college and university, as well as many opportunities for urban revitalization. However, Fresno continues to suffer from a malaise including double digit unemployment, urban sprawl, abundant automobile accidents, and accompanying image problems. The Fresno County Green Party offers an alternative to politics as usual and is dedicated to helping our region move forward. We are a grass-roots, value-based party of activists, not a campaign funding-driven party of personalities.

During the Fresno County Green Party's formation meeting last month, several experienced activists accepted the challenge of building our local party as members of the Green Party County Council (central committee). The twenty Greens present also reached consensus to focus on certain issues in coming months.

Living Wage campaign: In *The Future of Capitalism*, free-market cheerleader Lester Thurow illustrates how inflation-adjusted, median US wages have fallen by 30% in the last three decades, while economic indicators have skyrocketed. For Fresno, the latest HUD figures show that unemployment has come down several percent over the last six years, while poverty in the county has substantially increased. The Green Party will team with the labor community to push for improved wage equity, ensuring that economic gains are shared by all workers.

Transportation/Land Use: As evidenced by the string of Operation Rezone convictions and a contentious round of

Continued on page 11



Cartoon by Bradford Veley, Marquette, MI

Valley Labor Chatter

LABOR'S STRATEGIC PLAN

Members of the Fresno/Madera/Tulare/Kings Central Labor Council met on May 7 to set priorities for the organization. The group identified politics, organizing and education as the top areas of work for 1999. It was agreed that the CLC needs to develop a plan to increase its capacity to mobilize members. There was also discussion on what the CLC can do to support organizing.

DIGA SI!

Channel 21 employees voted May 4 to be represented by the Communication Workers of America. The Spanish Language broadcaster ran a nasty anti-union campaign, but the employees which include on air talent and technical operators voted 11 to 10 for the union. According to reporter Reina Cardenas "This fight was like David and Goliath... and you better hit Goliath right in the eye." She added that this victory is "very important to the Spanish speaking community and the media because we are the number one station in the Valley." Other television stations in Fresno with unionized workers are channel 24, 30, and 47.

IMMIGRANT OUTREACH PROJECT TO START IN JUNE

The Labor/Community Alliance will begin a project to bring together union organizers and immigrants by conducting a survey of immigrants needs, interests and opinions about work and unions. Plans are in place to conduct the survey at Colegio Popular in June. If you would like to volunteer to help with the surveys call Pam at 226-0477 or 275-1404. The Labor/Community Alliance plans to design an outreach project from information gathered through this survey.

GOLDEN LANDS, WORKING HANDS

A video as big as the state of California!!!! A history in ten parts of the California working class and its labor movement, embracing its diverse elements for classroom and union hall. Produced with the generous support of the California labor movement and made possible by a grant from the California Council for the Humanities. For more information contact 510-832-8812.

VOTES ANTICIPATED ON DAILY OVERTIME PAY, SICK LEAVE

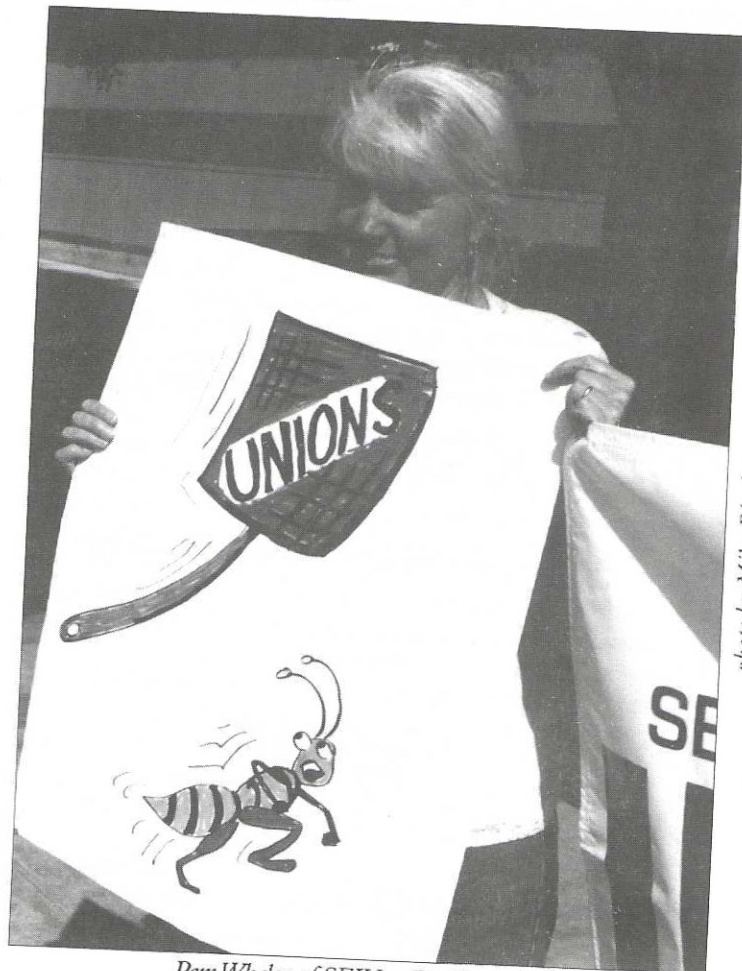
Federation-sponsored Assembly Bill 60, which would restore daily overtime pay and provide family friendly flexibility for California workers, is likely to come up on the Assembly floor next week. Assembly Bill 109, which allows employees to use sick days to care for family members, may be taken up on May 17.

UNION VICTORY AT THE FRESNO BEE

Jerry Haydostian, who was fired by *The Fresno Bee* for union organizing, won a victory last month in his struggle for justice. With a National Labor Relations Board hearing scheduled for May 11, *The Fresno Bee* offered Mr. Haydostian an offer that he could not refuse. "I am very happy with the settlement", Haydostian said.

In addition to the financial settlement (the terms of which can not be disclosed), *The Fresno Bee* agreed to post a notice at their work site clarifying employees legal rights to organize a union. After the settlement was offered, Haydostian said, "*The Fresno Bee* had a total disregard for the law and broke every rule in the book. This forces them to acknowledge that workers have the right to organize a union without being intimidated, threatened, or fired."

Mike Rhodes, union organizer for the Communication Workers of America, said that "*The Fresno Bee* knew that they were in violation of Federal Labor Law and would have been found guilty at today's hearing. The union is happy that Jerry won this well deserved victory and that *The Bee* has agreed to post a list of workers rights at the job site. We hope that *The Fresno Bee* will now stop violating its employees rights and that the workers will build a strong union representing their interests," Rhodes added.



Pam Whalen of SEIU at Bee Demonstration

photo by Mike Rhodes

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PASTORS FOR PEACE CARAVAN TO CUBA IN FRESNO

RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION PLANS CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE
CHALLENGE TO US EMBARGO OF CUBA

Pastors for Peace will come to Fresno as a part of its ninth "people's challenge" to the 39 year-old economic blockade of Cuba. The ninth US-Cuba Friendshipment caravan will deliver millions of dollars worth of life-saving raw pharmaceutical materials, medicines and medical equipment to the doctors and nurses of Cuba. This urgently needed material aid is designed to counteract the devastating effects of the blockade on Cuba's universal health care system.

**Pastors for Peace Caravan to Cuba Saturday,
June 5 - Potluck at 6 PM and presentation at
7 PM Fresno Center for Non Violence
985 N Van Ness**

Since 1992 IFCO/Pastors for Peace has organized eight Friendshipment caravans to draw attention to citizen opposition to the US embargo. Caravan participants have risked up to \$250,000 in fines and 10 years in prison to deliver medicines, ambulances, school buses, computers and powdered milk to Cuban churches.

"Although Cuba has an outstanding medical system, the US embargo denies Cuba access to many medicines which are manufactured here in the United States," said Rev. Lucius Walker, director of IFCO/Pastors for Peace. "Last year our caravan sent \$4,000 worth of raw materials which Cuba transformed into \$480,000 worth of antibiotics. This year we plan to take materials valued at over \$10 million."

The past eight caravans have delivered more than 1500 tons of unlicensed aid to Cuba.

"We intentionally take these caravans without seeking a US government license because we firmly believe that the US economic blockade is a crime against humanity," Walker continued. "As Pope John Paul II said, it is 'monstrously immoral'. Through this act of non-violent civil disobedience we believe that we can highlight the injustice of US policy toward Cuba and force it to be changed."

As many as 300 participants from churches, schools and community centers across the country, as well as from Canada, Europe, Mexico, Africa, Asia and South America are expected to participate in this historic challenge to US policy.

Beginning May 27, the caravan will travel along 15 different routes, stopping in 150 Canadian and US communities holding educational events, collecting material aid and additional participants. On June 11 the routes will converge on McAllen, Texas and then cross the border into Mexico. The aid will be loaded onto a freighter destined for Cuba and the participants will fly to Cuba for a week long program.

"The Clinton Administration recently proposed "cosmetic changes" in US foreign policy toward Cuba, despite growing opposition to the embargo. Unfortunately, the US government remains pathologically obsessed with the need to destroy Cuba," said Walker. "And we continue to be morally bound to disobey this immoral policy aimed at hurting the Cuban people."

The KPFA/PACIFICA CONTROVERSY

by Vic Bedoian

KPFA, the Berkeley-based listener-sponsored Pacifica Radio station, is facing what is perhaps the most serious crisis in its 50 years of existence. KPFA is heard throughout the San Joaquin Valley via Fresno affiliate station KFCF 88.1 FM and has thousands of dedicated listeners locally. The crisis was precipitated on March 31 by the firing of General Manager, **Nicole Sawaya**. A few days later veteran reporter and programmer, **Larry Bensky**, was fired for speaking about the issue on the air, and several other staff members were disciplined. Ironically, Sawaya was popular with staff and listeners and has exceeded fund raising goals, while Bensky is one of the most highly regarded journalists in the nation.

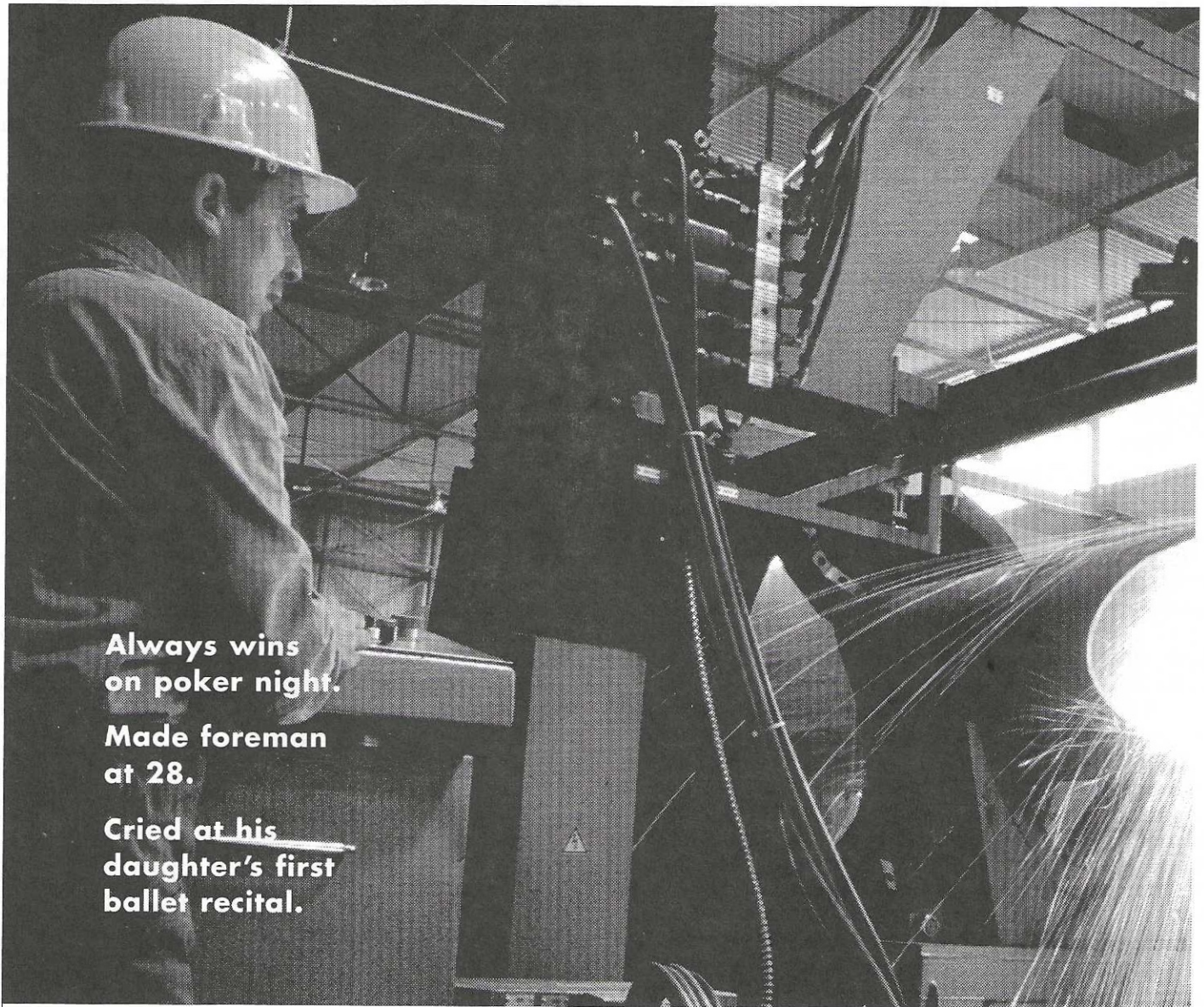
These actions created a fire storm of protest by the KPFA staff and management, as well as the entire audience. Moreover, the official celebration and fund raising activities of Pacifica's 50th anniversary were left in ruins. The anniversary was observed instead by a community demonstration in front of the station on April 15. In continual violation of a so-called "gag rule" that forbids programmers on the air, virtually every programmer has continued to talk about the crisis and advocate for their struggle. Despite the enormous presence of letters, phone calls, faxes, and email, the management of Pacifica has stood firm in its decision on the firings.



Pacifica Radio was founded by a group of pacifists, artists, and social activists who wanted to create an alternative to the commercial media, and provide a medium that could reach a wide audience for their viewpoint. KPFA went on the air on April 15, 1949 with the mission to provide a forum for the free expression of ideas. Since then Pacifica Radio has been an innovator of diverse and controversial broadcasting in both political and cultural realms, even through the harsh years of the Cold War. The Pacifica Radio now owns and operates non-commercial stations in New York, Los Angeles, Houston and Washington DC. In recent years Pacifica has been concentrating more decision making power into the hands of the national board of directors and executive staff and away from the local stations and advisory boards. This increased centralization of power has been accompanied by new vision has been emerging among the Pacifica leadership. That vision, articulated by a strategic plan, views the individual stations as "units" in a national network to be run from a central command and broadcasting more programs created for national satellite distribution. Local stations such as KPFA would have less authority over program and financial decisions. Many in community radio criticize this plan as an attempt by Pacifica to become a "left National Public Radio", an idea that differs from the "community radio" concept envisioned by Pacifica's founders.

KPFA's programming came to the valley when the Fresno Free College Foundation put KFCF on the air in 1975. The FFCF was born out of the free speech and anti-war struggles at Fresno State University in 1968, and continued as the Foun-

Continued on page 11



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development decisions by the Fresno City Council and County Supervisors, local land use planning has been left to check-writing developers for too long. The resulting auto-dependant sprawl has left Fresno with the dubious honor of being a "serious nonattainment area" for Federal Clean Air Act standards. Reform at the planning commission level will take structural changes in City government that Green Party organizers are already pursuing. The Green Party looks forward to participating in a coalition supporting a proposal for a Measure C transportation tax renewal based on enhanced transit, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities.

In response to immediate hazards to human health and local water quality, we have also created a **Pesticides Working Group**. To get involved on this issue, call 486-0165.

The Fresno County Green Party needs your enthusiasm and ideas to work towards social justice and a sustainable Central Valley. For more information about the Green Party and local events, contact us at: 497-1724, fresno@greens.org, and at <http://www.greens.org/california/fresno>.



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dation sponsored numerous political and cultural activities in the community. Bringing the voice of KPFA and Pacifica Radio to the valley was a logical extension of the Foundation's mission to provide a forum for free speech, academic freedom and cultural diversity. Over the years, the station has presented programs and community events focusing on a broad range of civil rights, labor and social issues, as well as visual and performing arts.

Since 85 percent of KFCF programming derives from KPFA and Pacifica, the current crisis directly affects the local affiliate. The KFCF Board of Directors issued a statement to Pacifica deploring the firings and supporting the demands of KPFA staff to rescind the firings and enter into mediated negotiations to work out differences between staff and Pacifica's management. Local listeners are also outraged by the actions and have been communicating their displeasure to Pacifica. Everyone concerned about the future of community radio at KPFA and KFCF are urged to contact Pacifica.

Lynn Chadwick, Pacifica Executive Director
1929 Martin Luther King Jr. Way
Berkeley, CA 94704
510-848-6767 x 202
FAX 510-845-0289
lynnchad@aol.com

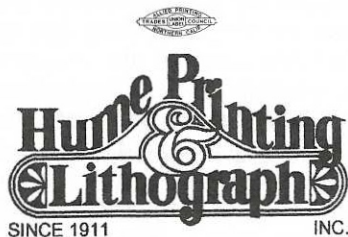
Dr. Mary Frances Berry, President
Pacifica Board of Directors
624 Ninth St. NW # 700
Washington, DC 20425
202-337-0382
FAX 202-376-7558
mfberry@sas.upenn.edu

The KPFA staff web site located at savepacifica.cjb.net.
The KFCF's office number is 559-233-2221.

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David Yancy
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Plumbers
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Glen Westersund
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Frank Flores
Sheet Metal Workers Local 162
Sheet Metal Manufacturing
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Restaurant Employees Union
Local 19
Restaurant Workers
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FRESNO NURSES BONE UP ON HEALTH CARE REGS

Some 25 Registered Nurses came together on May 22 to find out how they can use Title 22 regulations to advocate for their patients. This State law requires healthcare facilities to provide proper training, staffing and equipment to insure patient safety.



Glenda Canfield trains nurses to defend patient rights

Nurses from all the major hospitals and other facilities went away with powerful information on how to protect their patients and themselves from dangerous cost cutting measures in acute hospitals. "Now I really have the ammunition I need" commented one nurse at the training.

If you are interested in finding out more about Title 22, organizing a union at your job site, and other things that nurses do to advocate for safe healthcare for their patients call the American Federation of Nurses at 275-1404.

WORKPLACE RAIDS CHALLENGED

For the last two years, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) has rounded up undocumented immigrant workers at their worksites for deportation. Sweatshops multiply because of the INS raids, says the Coalition for the Human Rights of Immigrants in New York, whose members — immigrant rights, labor rights, and Latin America solidarity groups — have been opposing the raids through protests and an anti-raid hotline (888-57-LUCHA).

Undocumented workers — particularly those working under sweatshop conditions — avoid complaining about workplace abuses and don't form unions for fear their employer will call in the INS, have them detained, and possibly deported. This assault against undocumented immigrants, the Coalition argues, also undercuts the bargaining power of other vulnerable workers who compete against those suffering from illegal sweatshop conditions.

The INS first gained the power to raid workplaces in 1986. At that time, Congress also required that employers verify an employee's immigration status before hiring.

The coalition, along with 32 other organizations, has tracked the impact of 235 INS raids across the country to counteract the self-serving public declarations of the INS. This information is now available in a report by the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights. The report tells a story of violence, intimidation, and employers' use of the INS to break up union organizing. For instance, five days after Staten Island laundry workers sent their employer a letter demanding \$159,000 in unpaid wages, the INS raided the plant.

David Wilson of the New York Coalition relates his group's discovery that the INS singles out Mexican workers for roundup in the city. When asked why this was the case, an INS agent replied bluntly that it was cheaper to deport workers to Mexico than to almost any other country.

More than 150 labor, civil rights, religious and community groups are using the report to demand that the Department of Justice (which oversees the INS) stop the raids. *NYC Coalition for the Human Rights of Immigrants*, 212-254-2591; *National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights*, 510-465-1984. ■

— Alejandro Reuss