

# Labor/Community ALLIANCE

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VOLUME 4, ISSUE 8



AUGUST 1999

## YOUR UNIONS: IN A STATE OF SIEGE

by Alex Correa

Operating Engineers Local 39

Here, in Fresno, the mayor has declared "the unions" to be in a state of decline and on the verge of becoming extinct dinosaurs. This statement has come amidst a feeding frenzy of privatization created by the mayor's attempt to buy political support from the private sector. He is trading city workers' jobs in exchange for needed backing in his quest for another political office.

The "decline" referred to is part of a carefully crafted, long range plan that includes not filling vacant positions that were subsequently eliminated from the succeeding budget, "importing" administrators with proven union busting records, and fomenting unrest through intimidation and heavy handedness. In the city's strong mayor form of government, the mayor and city council members are constantly at odds and with varying agendas. As a result, the effort to preserve our jobs is made increasingly more difficult.

But what the mayor has failed to understand is that "the unions" are not some obscure persons or anonymous things. "The unions" are the very workers he is responsible for as he is the equivalent of a chief executive officer (CEO). If, as he says, we are not working as efficiently as possible, the responsibility must start at the top. In Japan such a failure would require the CEO to commit hara-kiri, here the CEO and his city manager receive wage increases and place the blame on the workers.

The mayor and his selected administrators (coconspirators) have begun a concerted effort to replace "living wage" jobs that include pensions and health benefits with minimum wage, unskilled labor, and no benefits whatsoever. He states that for us to

keep from becoming extinct, unions must stop making demands for fair wages and equitable working conditions. He speaks of competing with private industry and at the same time attempts to give away our jobs in a unilateral, bad faith manner.

Now the good news: We are not in decline, we are not going to become extinct nor are we dinosaurs.

Webster's dictionary defines a union as "a uniting of individuals into a group for a common cause or goal related primarily to enhancing workers' rights." We might also add the preservation of our jobs. Toward this end there are many things we can do to repel this assault on the valuable rights we have earned and negotiated over the years.

But the most important element to our survival is our unity. In this unity lies our strength. We must not allow ourselves to be intimidated into divisiveness. The inroads we have made have come as a result of the strength and unity we have exhibited. If we fail to maintain this unity and mutual support, we then become an easy target for those that would sell your jobs for personal gain.

*Continued on page 3*

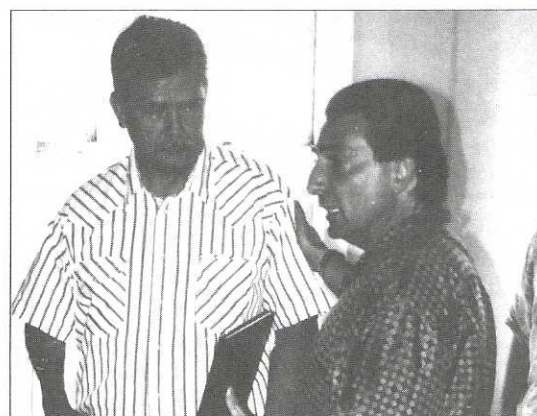


photo by Zay Bill

Patricio Sigala receiving "WAY OF PEACE AWARD" from Silvio Manno (teacher-protester at Rowell School.) They work together to empower immigrant parents and students through "PODAR", one of Pat's many involvements. Also receiving the award were Matilda Rangel, Alvin Valeriano, and Angela Price.

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## GUEST EDITORIAL

by Brian McNally

Mike Rhodes asked me in May if I would mind editing this newsletter in his absence this summer. Unaware of all the work Mike puts into this publication, I casually agreed.

You see, during the academic year at my law school, I am co-editor of *Rutgers Guild Notes*. As co-editor of the *Notes*, the process was simple: (1) pressure peers into writing articles, (2) spend a couple of late nights—drinking unhealthy amounts of coffee—putting everything together. Should be no different for the L/CA—right?

Wrong.

And I will certainly make no claim that I filled Mike's shoes this month. Much of the credit for this month's edition should undoubtedly go to Phyllis and Bob, the L/CA's layout whizzes. So when they asked me to write a section talking myself up, I did as they said. So follows a very brief account of my involvements for the past few years:

I began my work with the Labor/Community Alliance last spring after meeting Pam Whalen, a member of the editorial board, through FASTA/SEIU's effort to organize Fresno Unified substitute teachers. Labor activism was a passion which began for me in college, of all places. In that year after I graduated from college, when I was working as a substitute teacher and volunteering as a FASTA/SEIU organizer, Pam made sure I channeled some of that passion into the L/CA. Last August, for instance, I was assigned to write an article on the Fresno Bee pressroom workers' election victory, in which I was involved.

Then I went to law school.

Upon graduation from law school, I plan on practicing labor and employment law, as well as advocacy for the poor. I also plan on spending all my future income repaying student loans.

I hope you enjoy this edition. Mike will resume editing next month.

In Unity.



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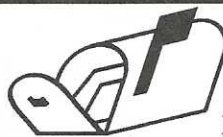


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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Like the military industrial complex, the prison-industrial complex is a mix of private business and government interests. Its twofold purpose is profit and social control. Its public rationale is the fight against crime. In the 1970's Chief Justice Warren Burger called for turning prisons into "factories with fences." (Sound like sweatshop operations throughout the world?) And the nation has heeded the call. Big business, looking for cheap labor and greater profits, sees prison labor as the answer. Much like the maquiladoras of Mexico, who are working for slave wages for US multinationals, prisoners are being paid as little as 23¢ per hour to manufacture goods for companies like McDonalds, TWA and Starbucks. A Department of Justice publication makes it clear: "Inmates represent a readily available and dependable source of entry-level labor that is a cost effective alternative to work forces found in Mexico, the Caribbean Basin, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Rim countries."

Ray Ensher member, Fresno's Death Penalty Focus

Your "Is Fresno Ready for a Living Wage" (May 1999) article was most interesting but was a bit behind the times. In 1972 Richard Nixon's Secretary of Labor advocated for a \$10 minimum wage as a living wage. With the inflation since 1972 \$10 is not a living wage. A living wage should cover what food, shelter, transportation, cost in a given community. Even here in Fresno with our reputation for cheaper living costs, \$10 is not a living wage.

Today we should be advocating for a minimum wage of \$10 per hour on a Federal level. This is far from a living wage but as a minimum wage it would at least give people a start towards a "Living Wage".

With the alliance the Labor/Community Alliance is making here in Fresno; church's, citizen groups, social action groups, etc, Fresno could start a Nation Wide revolution towards not only a "Living Wage" but Labor's alliance with community groups which could give labor the clout to get the minimum wage raised to a starting point of \$10; thus giving every community a more realistic starting place to get a "Living Wage" in their area.

Valta Pointer

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## LABOR/COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

*The Labor/Community Alliance is independent and dedicated to building a coalition of organized labor and progressive community groups to pursue 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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### **YOUR UNIONS: IN A STATE OF SIEGE** *continued from page 1*

Employers throughout the nation have found that a strong, professional union, dealt with in a fair and equitable manner, leads to a positive and productive work environment. Unfortunately, there are some employers who have not discovered this truism and, as a result, we must work harder to ensure that we are given the level of respect and recognition we deserve.

To this end we must stay involved, stay alert and stay united.



*City employees fighting for a fair contract in 1997*

Photo by Mike Rhodes

## END SANCTIONS AGAINST IRAQ

*by Richard Stone*

Remember Iraq? That's where Bush, Sr. proved his manhood against the "man we love to hate". Remember Saddam Hussein? That's where Clinton wagged the dog while Monica-gate threatened to overtake him.

Iraq is no longer on presidential lips or in the news. But U.S. bombs still fall regularly and our unilateral sanctions (disavowed by the U.N.) still prevail, causing thousands of deaths in a criminal war of attrition against civilians. Meanwhile Saddam still reigns.

We need to remember Iraq, and end the sanctions. Toward that end, the Fresno Iraq Committee, the Fresno Center for Nonviolence, Masjid Fresno, the Unitarian Universalist Church and other groups are co-sponsoring a presentation by **David Sylvester**. An Oakland based writer and teacher, Sylvester accompanied a group from *Voices in the Wilderness* on a trip to Iraq in defiance of the U.S. embargo on humanitarian aid there.

Sylvester went as an observer and came back an advocate. His experiences have led him to use his professional skills in support of *Voices*. He has a powerful story to tell, with slides; and his cause is worthy. Please come, with checkbook in hand: Saturday 28 August, 7:00 p.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 4144 N. Millbrook. For information phone Richard at 266-2559.



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# FRESNO CENTER FOR NONVIOLENCE

## Center Report: August 1999

by Richard Stone

### SECOND TUESDAY

This special institution, which occurs oddly enough on the second Tuesday of each month, was initiated as a chance for members to speak informally and intimately about a subject of intense interest to the evening's host. While the public is invited, we are mostly concerned with real conversation rather than "passing on information" to a lot of people. Sometimes a video is shown, but as often there is simply personal presentation and discussion. We also use the get-together as a chance to put the Center back in order, so the evening goes: **5:30 clean-up; 6:30 pot luck dinner; 7:30 program.** The upcoming schedule is, on **Aug. 10th, *Dead Man Walking***, hosted by Maria Telesco, and on **Sept. 14th, *Police Brutality***, hosted by Matilda Rangel (whose son was killed by the police several years ago.) Please consider joining us regularly.

### ON-LINE!

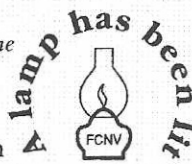
Thanks to a generous donation of equipment by Bob & Phyllis Fess Baker, the Center now is back on e-mail. Our address is [fcnv2@juno.com](mailto:fcnv2@juno.com). Valta Pointer has committed to checking messages at least once a week.

### WHEELCHAIR PROJECT

Honorary Board Member Patrick Young (apparently afraid of being thought lazy) has signed on to assist the **Marin Interfaith Task Force** with sending a bus-load of equipment to Haiti by preparing (and quite possibly driving) one of the buses he has acquired over the years. **Monetary donations are needed for Patrick's latest feat of activism.** Checks can be sent to the Center, memo "*Wheelchair/Haiti*".

### HIROSHIMA REMEMBRANCE / ANTI-NUKE PROTEST

It is indeed apt to remember the horrors perpetrated by the U.S. on Japan in dropping the atomic bomb by protesting the development of the next generation of ever-more destructive weapons up Highway 99 at Livermore. On Friday Aug. 6th, a group of us will meet at the Center around 10 a.m. and carpool to the demonstration site, returning in the evening. If you are interested in coming with us, you can just show up, but a message at 237-3225 would be appreciated.



## The Welch Report 13 July 1999

by Jack H. Welch, M.D.

President Clinton, the first world leader to do so, signed the **Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)** nearly three years ago; however, the US Senate has yet to hold a hearing on it. With a Sept. 25 ratification deadline approaching (third anniversary of treaty's opening for signature), treaty activists are stepping up their campaign to bring the measure to the Senate floor.

The treaty remains bottled up in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, whose chair is Jesse Helms (R-N.C.). Senate majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.) could bring it directly to the floor but he is not so inclined.

The CTBT includes a pledge against all testing of nuclear devices, and sets up a global system of sensors to monitor compliance.

**ACTION:** ask our Senators to urge Sen. Lott to put the CTBT on the Senate agenda without delay.

Despite the signing of the CTBT our government has allocated \$40b over the next decade to do sub-critical and computer-simulated nuclear weapon tests, as well as build a facility that can produce such weapons (National Ignition Facility). It is the belief of some that the fusion technology being developed at the NIF, being built at Livermore Laboratory, and a similar laboratory in France (Megajoule) is primarily weapons, not energy, related. This research will make possible the production of nuclear weapons the size of a pen which could destroy buildings, or weapons small enough to be put in a vehicle which could destroy a city. (*Desert Voices*, Nevada Desert Experience June 1999)

Nevada Desert Experience together with the Fellowship of Reconciliation and other groups are sponsoring an event called "**Millennium 2000, Walking the Ways of Peace**", to be held in Las Vegas the weekend of New Year '00. Jonathan Schell and Daniel Berrigan will be keynote speakers. At midnight Jan. 1, '00 a candlelight procession will walk to the Nevada Test site gates, with an optional nonviolent direct action procession onto the Test Site. Perhaps nuclear weapons activists from Fresno should be represented there?

**The House has passed a \$289b Defense Authorization bill** (which does not include funding for troops in Kosovo). The \$289b includes \$91b for new weapons and funds for Star Wars, the technology for which does not exist. This budget accounts for more than half of all federal discretionary spending, and its passage means cutting other domestic discretionary spending by over \$26b.

"Much of the FY2000 military budget is for weapons we don't need; e.g., with a force of 2300 of the best fighters in the world (we used only 493 of these, or 21%, in Kosovo and Iraq combined), the new budget put a down payment on 3,889 more such planes at a cost of \$321b — enough to repair our 30,000 dilapidated schools three times over!" (*Calif. Peace Action* June 28, 1999).

(Note: from *Welch Report* June 15 statement "Serb military responded with a crackdown on the KLA" should have been followed by "in early 1998".)

**YARD SALE SEPTEMBER 25th**



**Save stuff !!!**

**plan on donating time**

**Friday, 24th p.m.**

**Saturday, 25th early a.m.**





The Central Labor Council will hold the annual Labor Day Picnic on Sunday, September 5th at the CSFU campus. Call 271-1288 for more information.



Wednesday, September 8  
Death Penalty Focus presents  
Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ  
Call 323-4871

(See the movie *Dead Man Walking* at the Center, August 10)

*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/>



## Organization that Advocates for Rights of Oaxacan Immigrants Moves

by Brian McNally

The **Frente Indígena Oaxaqueño Binacional** (Binational Oaxacan Indigenous Front; FIOB), an organization founded eleven years ago to serve the needs of indigenous migrants from southern Mexico, recently celebrated its move to an office in downtown Fresno.

The new office—located in the Hmong American Community's building on the Fulton Mall—will increase FIOB's visibility and influence in the valley. Founders Rufino Domínguez Santos, Arturo Pimental Salas, Gaspar Rivera Salgado, and Sergio Méndez Palma operated FIOB out of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Livingston for its first ten years. Now in Fresno, FIOB's headquarters are more central to the valley-wide community it serves.

The immigrant population from Oaxaca, which is growing rapidly in the United States, especially in California, is distinct in many ways from the immigrant population from the north of Mexico. Perhaps the most notable difference is that many Oaxaqueños do not speak Spanish fluently, but instead speak the language native to their region, frequently Mixteco or Zapoteco.

This creates a very troublesome language barrier for Oaxacan immigrants where communication with employers or government officials is necessary. For this reason, the FIOB has created an Indigenous Interpreters Project, which provides interpreters for situations where they are needed, such as in the court system or the hospitals.

The FIOB also teaches workshops on labor and civil rights, housing, immigration, women's issues, and general health. These workshops are usually taught from homes in rural communities where many Oaxaqueños live and work. In conjunction with California Rural Legal Assistance, FIOB advises Mixtec-speaking farmworkers of their legal rights. And Oaxacan women—who are often difficult to organize because their culture teaches them to stay in the home, according to Women's Coordinator Irma Luna—are educated on such topics as domestic violence and breast cancer.

Most recently, at their post-inauguration festivities, FIOB signed an agreement with the Kern County Economic Opportunity Corporation (KCEOC) to provide childcare for children of indigenous families. Childcare centers will be established in Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, and Tulare counties; the number of centers per county and their specific locations has not yet been decided. These childcare centers will be mindful of the work schedules of indigenous parents and will be staffed by people who can communicate in indigenous languages.

All of these services are provided by the FIOB to the end that Oaxacan community rights are respected and Oaxaqueños themselves realize the richness of their culture and the value in preserving it.

For more information, contact the Frente Indígena Oaxaqueño Binacional at 449-1178 or e-mail [fiob@igc.org](mailto:fiob@igc.org).



## IMMIGRANTS WIN RIGHTS TO SOCIAL SERVICES

by Gloria Hernandez

On May 25, Vice President Gore announced a major clarification (not change) of the regulations governing "**Public Charge**" with regard to use of health care programs. The new policy is effective immediately. Immigrants will need "sponsor affidavits" to secure their rights.

"Public Charge" is now defined to mean "an alien who has become (for deportation purposes), or is likely to become (for admission or adjustment of status purposes) primarily dependent on government for subsistence, as demonstrated by either the receipt of public cash assistance for income maintenance or income for long-term care at government expense."

Not subject to public charge consideration are non-cash benefits (and special purpose cash benefits) that are not intended for income maintenance. **Utilization of any health services program, will not give rise to public charge.**

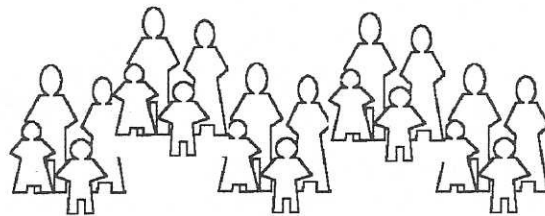
Using the following benefits will not affect immigration status:

✓ Health Care: Medi-Cal and the Healthy Families Program—**unless** Medi-Cal is used for long term (nursing home) care.

✓ Other Health Services, including immunizations, prenatal care, testing and treatment of communicable diseases and emergency medical assistance.

✓ Nutrition Programs, including Food Stamps, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), and school lunch and breakfast programs.

The federal government has not yet issued regulations on how the affidavits will be enforced, or how much the sponsor will actually be liable. No state or local jurisdiction has developed enforcement mechanisms, nor have they identified which program if any, sponsors will be liable for under the new affidavit. If your sponsor signed a "new binding affidavit of support", you are eligible for state-funded Medi-Cal (without counting your sponsor's income) and right now the state does not have plans to go after your sponsor.



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## LIVING WAGE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

by Mike Rhodes

### "What do we mean by a 'living wage'?"

It's simple. At an absolute minimum, it means that someone working full-time should never fall below the poverty line. The exact amount varies from state to state or city to city, but most campaigns are now pushing for about \$10.00 an hour with benefits. Hard-working people should be able to afford the necessities of life for themselves and their families.

Some call that radical. We call it a "family value."

### "Will living wage requirements cause unemployment?"

A study of Baltimore's living wage ordinance concluded that it had not produced layoffs. Likewise, a study of the Los Angeles living wage proposal concluded that it would not increase unemployment. These studies are described in more detail below.

### "Will employers leave town rather than pay living wages?"

Business always threatens that. But they rarely do. Moreover, some corporations take the subsidies and then leave anyway. And service contractors, such as cleaning or security services, can't move out of the city where they work.

### "How much will it cost?"

A study in Baltimore found that the real cost of city contracts had decreased since the city began requiring service contractors to pay their employees a living wage. This decrease was statistically significant. The study also found that administrative costs to taxpayers were "minimal...about 17 cents per taxpayer annually" and that no contractor had reduced their number of employees as a result of the ordinance.

Another illuminating study looked at the original living wage proposal in Los Angeles. The authors concluded that "the living wage ordinance can be implemented while causing no net increase in the City budget, no employment loss, and no loss of City services." In fact, they concluded that the ordinance would save state and local taxpayers \$33.3 million, primarily by reducing the need for food stamps and health entitlements. This study was done by a team led by Prof. Robert Pollin of the University of California-Riverside.

Continued on page 9



## HUMAN RELATIONS COALITION III

### Re-claiming the Peace Dividend

by Richard Stone

When the Soviet Union crumbled, a phrase was born: Peace Dividend. Q. What has happened to our Peace Dividend, the billions of dollars no longer needed for defense against the Soviet threat? A. Gone up in smoke.

*A Planning Meeting featuring Millie Livingston, former National Board Member of WILPF, just returned from the Hague Appeal for Peace, will be held on August 7 at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence, 985 N. Van Ness, at 10:00 a.m. All are invited.*

In the few years since the hope was raised of a world turned to peaceful endeavor, our country has drastically increased our military spending. We have begun developing the next generation of nuclear weapons (under the cozy name of "Stockpile Stewardship"). We have spent billions bombing and waging war against countries that pose no significant threat to our national security (Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Yugoslavia to name a few).



"She was disturbing the war..."

At the same time, investment in our social safety net and national infrastructure has been dramatically decreased. We invest more in prisons than schools. A larger part of most cities' budgets is utilized for police than ever before.

In short, we are becoming a militarized state, where human rights—both civil and economic—are given shorter and shorter shrift.

Is this direction the true "will of the people"? Is it a result of decisions made by an informed citizenry?

Those who believe that reducing violence in our lives and our world is a top priority...who believe that our fellow Americans do not have information needed for making good decisions...who want to participate in educational projects directed to reclaiming our Peace Dividend, please join us.

Following Ms. Livingston's report on the issues and strategies discussed at the Hague Conference, we will form a local strategy involving specific time-limited projects, aimed at the year 2000 elections. For additional information, call Richard Stone at 266-2559.



# Valley Labor Chatter

## LABOR DAY PICNIC SET

The Central Labor Council will hold this annual event on Sunday, September 5th at the CSUF campus. Call 271-1288 for more information.

## SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS REACH TENTATIVE AGREEMENT WITH FRESNO UNIFIED

In a major victory for substitute teachers everywhere, the Fresno Area Substitute Teachers Association SEIU Local 535 reached an agreement at the bargaining table on July 13th. The teachers' group had voted to be represented by SEIU 535 in January of this year and began bargaining in March.

The agreement still has to be ratified by both the union members and the FUSD board members. The tentative agreement provides for improvements in wages, retroactive pay for long term assignments, compensation for "sixth period", and some improvements in job security.

"Overall this is very positive. We could never have gotten this without a Union and in three years we can improve upon it", said Karla Hannston — the Secretary of FASTA. The agreement also provides for annual cost of living increases. (Substitute teachers taught ten years without a raise prior to unionizing.)

"It is a big leap in this town, said FASTA President, Shirley Kirsten, from now on we will get raises every year."

FASTA is the only independent substitute teachers' union in California.

**\*QUOTE OF THE MONTH:** "One day my daughter said to me, 'Mom, when I grow up I want to be just like you.' I was so happy. I said, 'You mean you want to be a nurse?' She said, 'No, I want to be a union steward.'"—SEIU Local 79 Steward Marge Robinson.

**\* AFTER A TALK BY FARM LABOR ORGANIZING COMMITTEE PRESIDENT, BALDEMAR VELASQUEZ**, high school students in Toledo, Ohio raised nearly \$2,000 from their lunch money and allowances for the family of Raymundo Hernandez. Hernandez, of San Luis Potosi, Mexico, died of pesticide exposure while working in a North Carolina tobacco field near where FLOC is organizing Mt. Olive pickle workers. A delegation of the students took the donations to the worker's family. On their return, they criticized "the indifference of our government" in not supervising the Guest Worker Program. Hernandez went to North Carolina under that program to work for the North Carolina Growers Association.

*\*from Labor Notes*

## \*FIELDCREST CANNON WORKERS UNITE!

While 285 challenged ballots remain, workers at Fieldcrest Cannon and UNITE organizers are confident they have achieved an historic victory at six of the sheet and towel makers plants in North Carolina. Rallying around the slogan, "We deserve a say," the 5,000 workers voted June 23. The election culminates a 25-year campaign by workers at the company to organize. In previous elections, most recently in 1997, the

NLRB found the company violated labor law and tossed out the results with a call for new elections with special requirements to ensure workers could vote free of intimidation. "We hope the NLRB will make its final determinations on the challenged ballots quickly so we can begin working with the employees on their first contract," said Bruce Raynor, UNITE secretary-treasurer.

## \*WORDS TO REMEMBER

"We must never forget that the economy exists to serve the human person, not the other way around," said Columbus, Ohio, Archbishop James A. Griffin in announcing the diocese' endorsement of the boycott of Mount Olive Pickles by Farm Labor Organizing Committee and the AFL-CIO. Columbus joins the diocese of Toledo Ohio, Raleigh, N.C., and some 100 other labor, religious and community groups in backing the boycott of the company. Mount Olive refuses to recognize the choice of its 5,000 workers—who harvest the cucumbers in Ohio and North Carolina—to join a union. "As a church, we believe that respecting human dignity demands the recognition that all workers have the right to participate in the economic decisions that affect their lives, to just working conditions and to fair wages," Griffin said.

*\* from Work in Progress*



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August 21<sup>st</sup>

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8:00 p.m. at 6661 N. Forkner

(between West and Van Ness Extension, Sierra and Herndon)

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artists to be announced

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*Alert!! 7 August, 10 AM, there will be a training session for volunteers for our new radio station. 2135 Fresno St. at the HUD building. Anyone who wants to work on Free Radio San Juaquin is invited.*



## HEALTH CARE FOR ALL - CALIFORNIA

by Diane Scott

Health Care Bill SB 480, now in the Assembly Health Committee, is to be heard July 16, after which the legislature takes a summer break until Aug. 16. When they return, if the bill has passed the Health Committee, it will go to the Appropriations Committee to be heard by Aug. 27. After passage there, the full Assembly will vote on it by Sept. 10.

It is time for every Californian to take action. Write a letter of support for SB 480 to send to your assembly member: Assembly Member Mike Briggs, Room 2111, Capitol Building, Sacramento, CA 95814 or: Assembly Member Sarah Reyes, Room 5128, Capitol Building, Sacramento, CA 95814

Some points you might include to support SB 480 are:

✍ It will improve the health of all Californians which will lead to increased production which, in turn, will make health care cost effective.

✍ Health costs are rising and employers are reducing their share of coverage. This gives California the highest uninsured rate in the country.

✍ Any other arguments you think would be effective.

### Fresno Center for Nonviolence

SEEKS TREASURER: able to use Quicken accounting system; will process check requests, handle deposits, prepare monthly and annual financial reports. \$50.00 monthly stipend. Inquire with Richard Stone, 266-2559.

### FOOD NOT BOMBS and THE GAIA HOUSE

members (a collective of artists and activists) are in great need of a freezer or several refrigerators.

Both groups feed The Great Outdoors People in the park on Saturday and Sunday.

Contact Aaron at 266-5305

It's time to freeze the summer veggies!



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## Living Wage Questions continued from page 7 "Did Congress just do this?"

After talking for years, the President and Congress finally raised the minimum wage from \$4.25 to \$5.15. We call that a good start, but little more than that. Even so, the minimum wage is still 26% lower than it was in 1980 (after correcting for inflation). So while the two parties in Washington play politics over a tiny increase, The Labor/Community Alliance is working hard to achieve a real living wage for working Americans.

### "Shouldn't we let the free market decide wage levels?"

This isn't a choice between the free market and government regulation. The government already intervenes in the economy, with billions in subsidies for corporations and often lucrative contracts. By placing conditions on these subsidies, we're trying to make sure that those interventions help the great mass of American working families rather than only a few CEO'S.



"No business which depends for existence on paying less than living wages to its workers has any right to continue in this country. By living wages I mean more than a bare subsistence level - I mean the wages of decent living!"

- President Franklin Delano Roosevelt

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## Local Churches Encourage Social Action

by Pam Whalen

The Fresno Interfaith Sponsoring Committee is working with local residents to improve their lives. This project, which works with the members of ten local churches, focuses on grassroots organizing. Parishioners are trained to organize by asking other parishioners what issues are important to them. When a general consensus is reached the group formulates a plan to bring about the desired improvement. There are five Catholic parishes and five Protestant churches involved.

So far the project has convinced the mayor to set up after school homework centers in south and central Fresno, and to install stop lights at critical intersections. The group has a long range goal to achieve health care for uncovered groups. For more information call Humberto Garza at 442-3120.





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# HOW MANY HUMVEES DOES IT TAKE TO BUILD A BRIDGE?

by Mike Rhodes

When I was in Nicaragua in 1986 with the Fresno Latin American Support Committee one of our groups big concerns was that the U.S. military would invade the country. We visited this Central American country during the time of the US sponsored "contra war" against the popular Sandinista government. We were in Nicaragua to express our solidarity, give material aid in the form of medical supplies, and work for peace. I wanted to see for myself what conditions were like in Nicaragua. I was there to see the free medical care system, quality education for all, and the look in people's eyes as they struggled to build a new society based on social and economic justice.

This year I returned to Nicaragua to find that things have changed dramatically. US military aggression against Nicaragua was responsible for ousting the leftist Sandinista government and replacing it with a president that was much more sympathetic to the interests of US corporations and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Special economic zones (better known in the US as sweatshops) are now operating in this country, medical care was privatized making it impossible for the poor to afford treatment, and schools began charging tuition.

The shift to a "market economy" has been at the expense of the poor and appears to benefit only the rich. Nicaragua is now the 2nd poorest nation in Latin America, just ahead of Haiti with unemployment at about 50%. The outright invasion of Nicaragua with US troops that we feared in 1986 never happened. But, interestingly enough, the other day as I walked through Esteli (in Northern Nicaragua) I ran into US Army personnel. The next day there was a whole convoy of military vehicles through downtown Esteli. A real insult to the people here. They were stationed in Nicaragua and were extremely evasive about US intentions in the region. I don't think its any great mystery what they are doing here. Their presence protects US economic interests and sends the message to anyone thinking about social or economic change not to get their hopes up.

The economic and political interests in our country have forced a market economy down the throats of the people of Nicaragua and we back up the threat with US military might. The system works for those few people at the top who can sip cappachino at the Intercontinental Hotel and fly back and forth to Miami. But for the vast

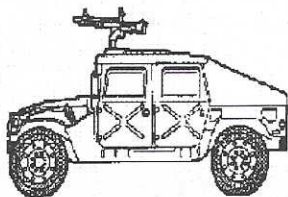
majority of the population the current economic system is a macabre joke that forces them to work in sweatshops or sell trinkets on the street corner. Children can't afford to go to school and the sick can't afford to see a doctor.

It is my belief that each of us can do more to work for social and economic justice. It is important that this work is done on issues of local concern but we can't forget about our relationship and connection with the rest of the world. The poverty in Nicaragua is a result of US policy in the region and the greed of corporations who close factories in the US and reopen them in special "economic zones". We must put pressure on our government to develop a foreign policy that meets the needs of the poor. We need to tell Wal-Mart, Disney, and The Gap that we demand a change in their manufacturing practices.

In the September newsletter, we

will report on a project that is making an important difference in the lives of Nicaraguan

High School students. The Fresno/Telpaneca Sister City Association scholarship project has made it possible for students to attend school rather than dropping out to work on the family farm. Find out more about this project and how you can support this expression of International Solidarity in the next issue of The Labor/Community Alliance Newsletter.





## TOWER YOUNG PEOPLE PROVIDE HEALTHCARE, CREATIVITY AND HOPE

by Kristen Freeland & Aaron Wright

The **Gaia House** is a community house in the Tower District serving as a center for artists, activists, and anyone interested in bettering their community. The Gaia House began in January of this year when the first members of its collective moved in. The house is occupied by Paul Scoot Mello, Aaron Wright, and Kristen Freeland. Scoot, the owner of the house, is 29 and has Cerebral Palsy. Although he is independent in certain ways, he will always need live-in care providers, who can be difficult to find because the job comes with a tremendous amount of responsibility. Many disabled persons receive poor care and 3 out of 4 are abused by their care providers.



Scoot's father, Tonee Mello, sought out young, compassionate providers for his son, not only because of the greater patience that comes with being young, but also to give the caretakers the benefits of making a living. Care providers make minimum wage. By working in their own house and having time for school, activism, and art, Scoot owning the house provides the freedom that renting does not.

Various artists have the opportunity of displaying their art through murals inside the house and outside as well. Scoot's aunt, Jean, has planted a beautiful flower garden in the front yard. A young Tower resident, Jeremy, was looking for a place to plant a community vegetable garden—he found the space at Gaia House and had students from nearby John Muir Elementary School plant a row of their own plants. A project in work is a raised bed garden for the disabled or elderly.

The **Cultural Coffeehouse** is a monthly gathering at the house. It offers an open mike showcase of poetry and spoken word. The Coffee House is **open the fourth Saturday** of every month.

The Gaia House started a **Food Not Bombs** meal for Sundays that is prepared here then taken to Roeding Park for the hungry. A bicycle repair shop was set up in the garage to provide alternative activities for at-risk youth. We need experienced bike repair people to work with the kids. Also a space for students to be tutored is being set up—we need someone who is interested in spending some time tutoring some of the local youth. The objective of the Gaia House is to be an ongoing positive force in the community. People who want to be a part of the collective are always needed and welcomed. To volunteer, or to find out more about ongoing and future events, call 266-5305.

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## THE INTERFAITH ALLIANCE'S SECOND ANNUAL FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATION OF DIVERSITY

by Diane Scott

The second annual Fourth of July Interfaith Alliance of Central California Celebration of Diversity was held Sunday, July 4, at O'Neill's Park on the CSUF campus. Many Alliance members from sixteen different faith communities volunteered their time, hard work, ideas, products, and talents to make it a memorable occasion for the approximately 550 people who attended from all over the valley and as far away as Long Beach.

A delicious brunch/lunch was served along with a good variety of entertainment. Rev. Bryan Jessup of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Fresno and member of the board of the Interfaith Alliance gave the opening words and Pastor Don Bentz of Hope Lutheran Church and cochair of the Alliance gave the closing words.

Entertainment was provided by the Latter Day Saints High School choir, the Clovis Heiwa Taiko Japanese drummers, Gail Abbott of Distaff, Shira Roth of Temple Beth Israel, Jackie Kelley of Joyful Noise Ministry, the Sikh Girls and Women Folk Dancers, Jack Weldon of the College Community Congregational Church, and the Girl Scouts. After the planned entertainment was over, there was an impromptu sing-along of "America the Beautiful," and "This Land Is My Land."

We were all honored to participate in celebrating the religious and racial diversity that makes our country great.



photo by George Elfie Ballis

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.



Sharing the fun at the TIA Diversity Picnic



The Labor/Community Alliance's editorial staff and members wish to thank, whole heartedly, all who came to our aid in a time of uncertainty. Your support means everything to us—it is how we keep publishing. We are pleased to know that you want our progressive newsletter available to you and your friends. We appreciate your contributions!

WHAT WE CAN'T  
DO ALONE  
WE CAN DO  
TOGETHER

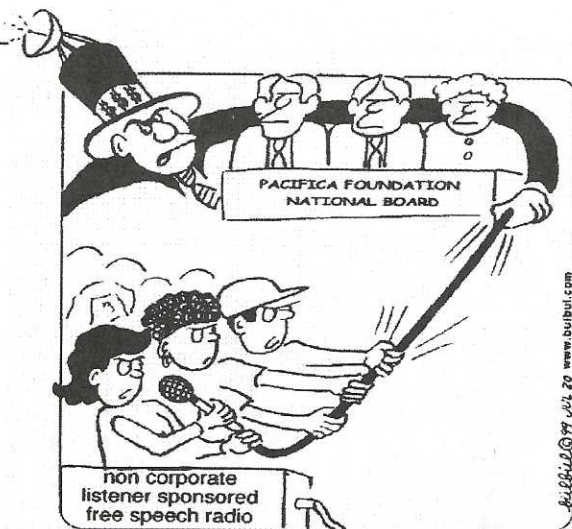


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Mail this form to:  
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 P.O. Box 5077, Fresno, CA 93755  
 Call 226-0477 for more information.



#### KPFA, DO YOU HEAR WHAT I HEAR?

Below is a portion of an intercepted e-mail memo (which Pacifica admitted to the San Francisco Chronicle is authentic) from Micheal Palmer, who is the treasurer-elect on the governing board. Palmer's email to Pacifica national board chair Mary Frances Berry puts forward a plan to destroy grassroots opposition and raise money to pay for the voracious cash needs of the national superstructure by selling either KPFA, the network's flagship station in the Bay Area, valued at around \$70 million, or WBAI in New York, probably worth even more.

by Bob Baker

From: Palmer, Micheal (@ Houston Galleria,  
 mpalmer@cbrichardellis.com  
 To: 'Mary Francis Berry', ma@igc.org  
 Hello Dr. Berry,

I salute your fortitude in scheduling a news conference opportunity in the beloved Bay Area regarding one of the most pressing issues of our time.....

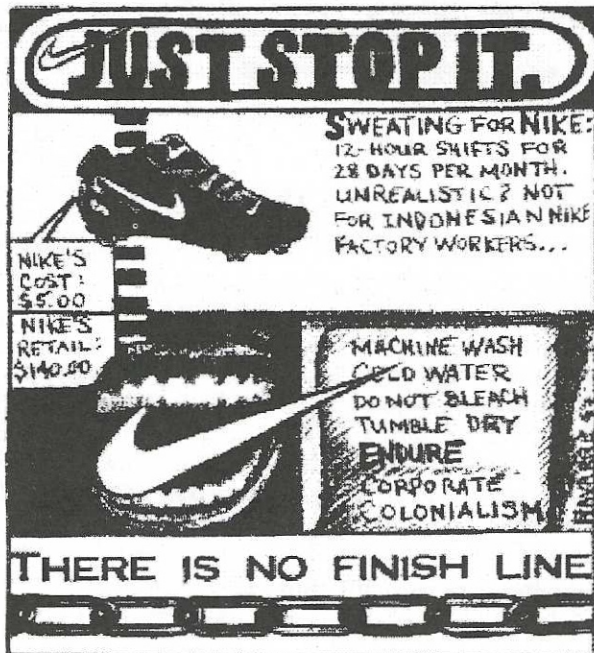
But seriously, I was under the impression there was support in the proper quarters, and a definite majority, for shutting down that unit and re-programming immediately. Has that changed? Is there consensus among the national staff that anything other than that is acceptable/bearable? I recall Cheryl saying that the national staff wanted to know with certitude that they [were] supported 100% by the Board in whatever direction was taken; what direction is being taken?

With this in mind I would encourage frank description of the realities of the media environment we operate in and of Pacifica's available resources to participate and have impact in the evolving media world. The Executive Committee, at a minimum, should have access to experts (whether from **Wall Street, NPR/CPB, Microsoft** or otherwise) to get a strong reality check (me included) about radio and Pacifica's position in it so that informed decisions can be made. My feeling is that we are experiencing a slow financial death which is having the normal emotional outbursts commensurate with such a disease. We will continually experience similar events, in fact we have been experiencing similar events over the past several years, primarily because we are not self supporting through subscriber contributions and have a self imposed constraint on asset redeployment that leaves us cash starved at a time when our industry is being propelled in new directions, each requiring capital outlays of consequence. We're boxed in at our own will. This board needs to be educated, quickly, and to take action that will be far more controversial than the KPFA situation. How can we get there?



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## Let's Get Organized

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- X** no benefits;
- X** no respect on the job?

**Call one of the following local union organizers to help you make the world a better place to work!**

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Pam Whalen, Gerry Villero,  
Yolanda Guerra  
SEIU Local 535  
Public Employees, Health Care, Social  
Services  
(559) 261-9312

David Yancy  
Plumbers Local 246  
Plumbers  
(559) 252-5367

Glen Westersund  
Engineers & Scientists of CA Local 20  
Technical & Professional Workers  
(559) 263-7481

Kenneth McCormack  
International Brotherhood of  
Electrical Workers Local 100  
Electricians  
(559) 251-8241

Marc Scalzo  
International Association of  
Machinists & Aerospace Workers  
Local 653  
Auto Repair, Industrial, Retail  
Consumer, Electronics  
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Doug Whipple  
Local 701  
Carpenters  
(559) 268-3895

James Todd  
Rachel Rodriguez  
Ninfa Franco  
SEIU Local 250  
Health Care Union  
Representing 47,000 Health Care  
Workers in No. California  
(559) 271-7005

Al Madrigal, Jr.  
United Steel Workers of America  
Manufacturing  
(559) 264-5342

Frank Flores  
Sheet Metal Workers Local 162  
Sheet Metal Manufacturing  
(559) 255-0454

Hotel Employees  
Restaurant Employees Union  
Local 19  
Restaurant Workers  
(559) 485-0601

United Food & Commercial  
Workers Local 1288  
Retail Clerks, Wholesale & Poultry  
(559) 271-1288

Jimmy Hammack  
Teamster Local 431  
(559) 486-5410