

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 8

AUGUST 1997



FCEA demonstrates solidarity

by Cindi Pugh

Some 350 members of the Fresno City Employees Association took to the streets July 1 to demonstrate their frustration over the lack of progress at the negotiating table with the city. After 13 sessions, the city had failed to make any salary offer to the union, and the contract had ended the night before."When we get half our people on the streets at a moment's notice, you know they're angry," said FCEA's business agent, Gene Zimmerman.

All the city's unions are watching these negotiations, according to Zimmerman, because the city has placed on the table a clause to remove the union's agency shop rights, which has a direct bearing on dues collection. "This is a direct attack on our resources to represent the workers in our bargaining unit," Zimmerman said.

The union declared an impasse in the talks and is requesting intervention by the State Mediation/Conciliation

Service to get the parties back on track. Twenty items are still in contention, and the union is now pressed on the issue of retroactivity in the wage language."We're still confident that a majority of the City Council members will override the city administration and send them back to get a deal by early August," Zimmerman said.

Labor Day Sunday Picnic

Sunday, August 31

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

Barbecued tri-tip dinner served from 2-4 p.m. \$7.50 (children under 12 free)

> Games, music, raffle Call 275-1151 for ticket information.



Kaiser Nurses' Strike

Phone report from Don Nielsen, CNA "This strike is not about bringing Kaiser to its knees (although we are kicking their ass). It's primarily about publicizing the fact that standards of care are continuing to go down. During this

strike, we've done a good job of letting the general public know about that.

"We're continuing to fight for quality health care and a fair contract. We've succeeded in preventing take-aways and concessions. We will not back down. And let's face it, we may still be out here when the other unions representing other Kaiser workers come up for contract renewal.

(continued on p. 2)

The purpose

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

Project Coordinators

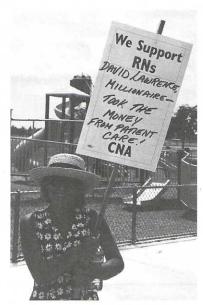
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E-mail: clr2@igc.apc.org

Kaiser strike, cont. from p. 1



"Our supporters can help by calling and writing Kaiser, letting them know they support the nurses.

"The strikes are just one component of our fight. We're also battling on the legal front over Kaiser's unfair labor practices; we're fighting—and winning—court challenges; we're picketing, leafleting, giving presentations to various groups, and demonstrating in front of Boards of Supervisors around the state.

"We've got total labor backing: Central Labor Councils, independent unions, the Labor Party. . . . It's a full court press, designed to take the place of long-term protracted strikes that have failed us in recent years because of the bastardization of labor laws.

"It's worse than a bastardization, it's basically the deregulation of labor relations. As Richard Trumka said recently, maybe we should tear up these phony laws and just take the fight to the street!"



Subscribe! Your subscription to the *Labor/Community Alliance* is free when you join the Frank Little Chapter of the Labor Party. Or you can get on our mailing list by writing to us at the address above. Donation: \$50, \$35, \$10 per year, or whatever you can afford. We also gladly accept donations of self-adhesive stamps. Call John at 226-2078 with questions or comments.

We need your help! Can you spare a few hours each month to participate in some kind of labor or social justice action? Please read about Volunteers for Justice, page 8, and let us know how you would like to participate.

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The Gap: Jobs with Justice?

by Pam Whalen

The Gap is probably going to locate a huge regional distribution center here in Fresno. The facility will employ more than 600 people. The city and state are going all out to bring The Gap to our community. The Fresno City Council voted unanimously to give the company enormous concessions on land use and tax breaks. Nobody has seriously questioned if this is a good idea or not.

What kind of a company is The Gap? Will The Gap hire local union labor to build the facility, or will it hire an out-of-town construction company using non-union workers? Is The Gap coming to Fresno because it sees us as a source of cheap labor? Does it think it can pay workers here less because of high unemployment and poverty rates?

We know this for sure: The Gap has contracted most of its manufacturing out to third world countries where its clothing is made in sweatshops. It does this because it can't get people to work here for 35 cents an hour. When international human rights groups called The Gap on its exploita-

tion of workers in El shop and declared it pastures (like Honspotlight of public as brightly. The lesworkers complain



Salvador, it closed the was going to greener duras) where the concern did not shine son here was that if about horrendous

working conditions, the multinational company will close its doors and move to another third world country where people are even more desperate.

Pressure from the international community forced The Gap to "do the right thing" and re-open its El Salvador facility. It even has an independent monitoring system in place that is carried out by an alliance of local human rights and religious groups. Things have improved, but not because The Gap is such a nice company.

It is not enough to fall into line with the fawning City Council members and the mayor who apparently believe that all "big business" is good business. The question that begs to be asked is: Is it in the best interest of working people in this community when a company like The Gap comes to town? WalMart may bring a few jobs to town, but they also drive locally owned stores out of business, pay minimum wage, and are union-busting SOBs.

Will The Gap provide good-paying jobs to its Fresno employees? Will the company hire union construction firms to build its facility? Will it abide by the law and respect its employees' right to organize? Will The Gap make a good, law-abiding neighbor? Will it pay its fair share of taxes?

Only after we have the answers to those questions should we think about offering The Gap concessions to move into the community.

State workers rally for raises, rights and respect

by Mark Bautista

Nearly 200 state workers from DLC 771 and DLC 772 (CSEA/SEIU 1000), which cover part of Kern and all of Tulare, Kings, Fresno and Madera counties, filed onto buses



on June 27—some as early as 4:30 A.M.—to be part of the a massive lunchtime rally of more than 3,000 state workers at the state Capitol. Valley participants were among some 1,500 who traveled from as far as San Diego and the Oregon border for the

event. CSEA demonstrators and their supporters turned the Capitol's green lawns red as they marched in their red T-shirts to express their anger at the Wilson Administration for its clear attempt to break the back of one of the largest public sector unions in the nation by not giving state workers a fair contract in more than two years.

Death penalty foes to gather for vigil

by Maria Telesco, Death Penalty Focus

A man who may be innocent is scheduled to be executed shortly after midnight August 4/5 in San Quentin Prison's death chamber.

Thomas M. Thompson, 42, was convicted of the 1981 rape and murder of Ginger Fleischli in Orange County. No "hard" evidence of his guilt was presented at trial, and he had neither a motive for the killing nor a previous criminal record.

Thompson was convicted solely on the unsubstantiated testimony of two jailhouse informants who claim he confessed to them. Seven lawyers, all prosecutors, filed a friend-of-the-court brief alleging that Thompson's trail lawyer did not defend him adequately, and that one of the informants received "favors" from the prosecutor.

Thompson's roommate, David Leitch, the victim's former boyfriend, did have a motive: Fleischli allegedly interfered with his attempts to reconcile with his estranged wife. Leitch, whose footprints were found near Fleischli's body, was convicted of second degree murder in a separate trial. The amicus brief asserts that the prosecutor put forth two differing theories of the crime in Thompson's and Leitch's trials.

Death Penalty Focus will hold a nondenominational vigil service on Monday, August 4, at 7:30 p.m. at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence, 985 N.Van Ness. All are invited to attend.

Petition calls for "Yes! to Human Rights, No! to Sweatshops"

Leading up to a National Day of Conscience on October 4, and a Holiday Season of Conscience in November and December, the National Labor Committee (NLC) is now distributing anti-sweatshop petitions. Up to a million people are expected to sign the petitions, demanding that the President, the U.S. Congress and the White House Task Force to End Sweatshop Abuses say "Yes! to Human Rights and No! to Sweatshops."

The actions are sponsored by a broad coalition of religious, human rights, labor, student, women's and grassroots organizations, including (along with the NLC) the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (AFL-CIO, CLC), People of Faith Network, Congressman Bernie Sanders (I-VT), and the State Senate of Vermont among others.

The petition states: "We the People...believe that in our global economy, human rights protections are every bit as important as corporate rights." It calls for wages to be tied

National Day of Conscience, October 4 ** Holiday Season of Conscience

to the basic cost of living, and for workers to be free to organize to defend their rights. It will be presented to the White House Sweatshop Task Force, which will report to the President at the end of the year with its final agreement. This agreement will establish industry-wide human rights standards for the first time.

To show public opposition to corporate use of sweat-shop manufacturing, on October 4 there will be simultaneous actions in hundreds of communities across the nation (and around the world) — vigils, candlelight marches, interdenominational services, leafleting, music, demonstrations, street theater and more. Students from grade schools to universities will be asked to play a role. In the midst of the shopping season, the coalition will release a list of the companies with the worst records of human rights violations.

Charles Kernaghan, Director of the National Labor Committee, said: "There is an enormous decency in the American people who would never knowingly purchase products made by children, or any exploited worker, forced to toil under sweatshop conditions for starvation wages. Our job is to help create a vehicle to free this voice of decency on the part of millions and millions of American people. If we do our job right, we will create a social movement that will put a human face back into our global economy."

Order petitions and brochures from the National Labor Committee, 275 Seventh Avenue, 15th Floor, New York, NY 10001; Tel: (212) 242-3002 or download soon from the NLC website: http://www.nlcnet.org.

Peace Report

by Jack Welch, Fresno Center for Nonviolence

- Despite Jesse Helms' argument that "rogue" nations would not go along with the UN treaty eliminating chemical weapons, Iran's Parliament ratified it June 8, thus giving UN inspectors the right to check for weapons and production centers. (NY Times, June 9, 1997)
- A study involving nearly 800 second- and third-graders in Washington State revealed that those taught a violence-prevention curriculum over four to five months exhibited significantly fewer acts of aggressive behavior than those who had not taken the course. The program, known as Second Step, is used in more than 10,000 schools in the United States and Canada. (NY Times, May 24, 1997)
- From a New York Times editorial of June 20: A Code of Conduct setting out criteria for determining who can buy U.S. arms has passed the House of Representatives. The United States leads the world in arms sales, about half of which go to dictatorships. The code has drawn strong opposition from the Administration. It would require the President to make an annual list of countries eligible for American arms transfers, using different tests of democracy and nonaggression.

American weapons have been turned against American soldiers, notably in Somalia and Iraq. Also, these sales harm the buyers: 18 of the world's poorest countries spend more on their militaries than on education and health combined.

Whether or not agreed to by the Senate, this House action attests to the power of the idea that the world should refuse to sell arms to dictators.

Common Cause is mounting a campaign to stop "corporate welfare" by our government, which will cost taxpayers \$265 billion over the next five years. For example, wineries and whiskey makers receive millions every year to advertise overseas, and the tobacco industry receives millions in federal money to run its price support program. Special-interest campaign contributions guarantee continuance of these many subsidies. Contributions to further this campaign can be sent to Common Cause, 1250 Connecticut Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C., 20036.

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Why are people joining the Labor Party?

by Mike Rhodes

Lots of people are joining the Labor Party! Is it because they feel that big business and the rich have two parties and it's time for a party that represents the interests of working people? Are you tired of the choice between far right conservative Republicans and right/center Democrats in local elections? Should groups concerned about labor and social justice, who have progressive solutions, dare to challenge the power structure in Fresno and the San Joaquin Valley? Let's hear what our new members think.

Martin and Sharon Young recently joined the Labor Party. Sharon, who now does the layout on this newsletter, was a classmate of Gerry Bill (second interview) at a Berkeley seminary in the '60s. I asked Martin why he joined the Labor Party, what he would like to see the group do locally and what he thought about the Labor Party's campaign to amend the U.S. constitution to guarantee a right to a job.



MY: I feel that the Democratic Party no longer recognizes our commitment to the working people of America and to the poor and homeless as well. Accordingly, I believe we can find our sense of obligation to the common good better represented in the Labor Party. What I have in mind is nothing as monumental as establishing a three-party system to upset the two-party system. Not at all. I believe we can re-

store the two-party system by participating in the Labor Party. An objective that appeals greatly to me is to see labor take back its historic place and voice in the Democratic Party. After all, if Ralph Reed and the Christian Coalition can take over the Republican Party, why can't we who believe in the dignity of all human beings make a vigorous stand on that principle?

I think the Labor Party's campaign to amend the Constitution to guarantee every citizen a job is a smashing idea. It would certainly stir up the pot and get some media attention.

When I was a boy, I learned a song entitled "The Union Maid," and I remember well the first few lines: "There once was a union maid, who never was afraid of goons and ginks and company finks...."I don't know if it's appropriate to sing that song anymore, but I'd do it at the drop of a hat, at least among some brothers and sisters in the union movement.

One final thought. I worked my way through college as a part-time janitor for Pacific Bell, which was called Pacific Telephone and Telegraph back then. My father had a long career with the company, and by the time I started my stint in Oakland, he'd been promoted to a management-level job in

San Francisco. Of course, I joined the Communications Workers of America as soon as I went to work. I was in the Liberal Arts program at St. Mary's College, where the subjects of economic and social justice merited a lot of attention.

Within a year we went on strike. While I was walking the picket line, one of my father's management friends accosted me, gave me hell and told me: "Your father will be ashamed of you when I tell him that you are so ungrateful."

A few days later, the next time I saw my dad, he remarked, "I heard that so-and-so gave you a tongue lashing for walking the picket line." I said yes, and he replied, "I gave him one, too, for daring to suggest that you were not man enough to stand with your union. Remember, you must remain loyal to your co-workers. Labor didn't get where it is now because of kind-hearted, generous management. It was a fight all the way, and don't you forget it." I haven't.

Gerry Bill, pictured here with a Cuban student on a school-rebuilding project in 1994, has been involved in social justice issues



in Fresno for many years. He is an instructor of sociology at Fresno City College and has been a member of AFT Local 1533 for 27 years. He is also the Center Director for the Fresno Center

for Nonviolence. He joined the Labor Party over a year ago and recently renewed his membership.

LP: How did you hear about the Labor Party, and what got you to join?

GB: I heard about the Labor Party from fellow City College employee (and Labor Party chairperson) John Veen. I went to one of the first Labor Party meetings in Fresno and agreed with the Labor Party slogan: "The bosses have two parties; We need one of our own!" The Democratic party does not represent working people. They passed NAFTA and GATT over the objections of labor, and they sold us out when it came to providing health care for all Americans. I am a strong supporter of a single-payer health care system. The Democratic Party used to at least pay lip service to the concept of universal health care; it was in the platform in 1992. But by 1996 the Democratic Party had dropped any mention of universal health care from its platform. That was a big step backward. Now they are talking about giving more tax breaks to the rich while cutting Medicare. That, of course, is on top of dismantling welfare. All of this is done in the name of a "bipartisan consensus," which really means the merging of the two parties into a single party representing corporate interests

(continued on p. 6)

Member Interviews, cont. from p. 5

and transnational corporations. How is an average citizen to find meaningful representation in a system like that?

LP: The Labor Party is not currently running candidates. How do you feel about that?

GB: That's OK. I would like to see them become a real party someday, but right now they are more of a social movement. It is a social movement that is sorely needed. They are doing good work. I hope that when the right time comes they will shift into doing electoral work.

LP: You recently renewed your Labor Party membership. What is the Labor Party doing that motivated you to renew?

GB: I really like the Labor/Community Alliance newsletter. It's vital that we build bridges that link the progressive community with the labor community. That link isn't always made. The bosses are always thinking up new ways to divide us, and the newsletter is a way to fight back against those divisions. I also appreciated the "Corporate Power and the American Dream" workshop held last May. This is the sort of thing that should be done on a regular basis—perhaps once a year. There was a diverse group that learned a lot about the economic system, and at the same time discovered the economic interests we all have in common despite our different backgrounds.

LP: What would you like to see the Labor Party do locally in the coming year?

GB: The Labor Party should definitely continue the newsletter. They should also organize more workshops along the lines of the Corporate Power workshop. For the long term, the party should build towards endorsing and/or running political candidates.

LP: Do you support the concept of a Constitutional Amendment to guarantee every American a job at a living wage?

GB: I certainly support the concept of guaranteed employment at a living wage. The Constitutional Amendment campaign is something I view as an educational tool to help raise people's awareness about the issues of low wages and unemployment. The Constitutional Amendment itself might never happen, but the organizing and educating that goes on around it is something that I see as very valuable.

LP: Do you have any other messages for our readers?

GB: Yes. If you have been disappointed by the devolution of the two-party system into a government by "bipartisan consensus," my advice is: **Don't complain; organize!**

Radio Bilingue has been given 12 Internet websites to be supported by CSU, Fresno. The websites are being offered to organizations willing to assist Radio Bilingue in an effort to create a communication support network for those affected by welfare reform and those working in affected communities, especially immigrant communities. Organizations may use the websites however they deem useful for this cause. For more information, please contact Daniel Olmos at 455–5777.

Labor News

Strawberry Alert, Watsonville. The 1,500 workers at Coastal Berry (formerly Gargiulo), the largest direct employer of strawberry pickers, are moving closer to having a union as more and more workers sign cards. At the largest of Coastal's two divisions, open support for the union runs from 60 to 90 percent. Progress is slower among smaller divisions. Many workers who had fought the union are now holding open discussions, asking questions about what a union could mean. Strawberry workers are filling out union surveys asking about their concerns and hopes as a first step in developing contract



demands. This is the first time anyone has asked workers their opinion, and even workers who had opposed the union are filling out the surveys. Results should be available soon. Workers are also filling out registration forms to determine eligibility for back pay under the \$575,000 settlement of a class action suit alleging illegal off-the-clock work with Gargiulo.

Spanish-language radio ads feature voices of Coastal Berry workers talking about their hopes for, and expectations of, a union. Outside Coastal Berry, community leaders are challenging Driscoll and its growers to stop their aggressive anti-union campaign. Hundreds of community leaders signed and paid for full-page ads in the Watsonville and Salinas newspapers, asking "Why won't Driscoll follow the leader?"

A powerful lobbying group, Western Growers Association, filed a charge with the state Agricultural Labor Relations Board alleging illegal collusion between Coastal and the UFW. Most view the charge as more evidence that powerful forces in agriculture will continue to fight the workers and try to stop an election, even with frivolous allegations.

For more information, call 1-888-235-2466.

Action! Motown '97 attracts 125,000 union members.

Some 125,000 union members from 40 different unions in 45 states poured into Detroit June 20–21 for Action! Motown '97 in support of locked-out workers at the *Detroit Free Press* and the *Detroit News*. The five unions representing the 2,000 workers were buoyed by an administrative law judge's June 20 ruling that the newspapers caused a 19-month strike, which may make the papers liable for up to \$80 million in back pay. AFL-CIO President John Sweeney told the marchers, "You have won the battle of Detroit! Now it is up to all the rest of us to pay our debt to you by fighting to the finish and winning the battle outside Detroit." Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka proclaimed that "this is a showdown between two stalking horses for all of corporate America and the full

force of the new American labor movement....We will win this struggle!" The two days of activities featured a prayer vigil in front of the *News*, a demonstration by religious groups and an AFL-CIO teach-in.

Video about Action! Motown '97 available." Marchin' in the Street" is the name of the new video about the giant march and day of action June 21. The video covers the march, the great river of 100,000 union members and supporters bursting the streets of downtown Detroit to show their support of the locked-out newspaper workers. In addition, the video explains, through action footage, interviews and narration, the background to this event: the early mass picketing, the rank-and-file appeal to the AFL-CIO to have the march, the campaign to build Motown '97. To order the 21-minute video, send a check or money order for \$25 to: Labor Beat, 37 S. Ashland, Chicago, IL 60607. For more information call (312)226-3330, e-mail lduncan@igc.apc.org, or log on to http://shoga.wwa.com/~bgfolder/lb.



Peace Petition

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) in Fresno is circulating a Peace Petition from Women of the World to Governments of the World. It is a beautiful statement expressing the goals of WILPF: decrying the level of violence in the world; calling for a five percent decrease in world military expenditures to be redirected to health, education and employment programs; calling for an end to slavery, colonialism and apartheid; and looking toward a new century that rejects warfare and promotes well-being, human rights and justice. Sponsors include groups from all over the world, and the petitions will be presented at the opening of the 52nd session of the United Nations General Assembly in September 1997. To help, call Ellie Bluestein at 229-9807.

UNICEF cards available

UNICEF's "Spring and Summer" collection of greeting and note cards is available at the Fresno Center for Non-violence (Monday–Friday, 12–5 p.m.). The designs and colors are wonderful, and the average price per card is 90 cents, considerably less than commercial cards. Proceeds provide medicine, clean water, nutrition and education to children in more than 140 countries. Mike Judy of the Living Room will be happy to show you a catalog and sell you cards or take your order. The fall/winter collection will be available this month. Call Angela Price, 435–6383, for more information.

Union and community groups help immigrants become citizens

by Roberta Ritchie

On July 12, with the help of SEIU Local 535, a group of immigrants started on the road to citizenship. Working in coalition with Colegio Popular, Central Coast Citizenship Project, Teamsters Local 746 and California Rural Legal Assistance, SEIU 535 sponsored "Citizenship Day." The event, which took place at St. John's Cathedral in Fresno, processed about 100 applicants. The coalition targeted those represented by Local 535 and their family members. The teamsters have been effectively using citizenship projects as an organizing tool and to help create positive public relations.

Following the philosophy of Central Coast Citizenship Project the outreach was kept small so that each applicant



could receive individual attention. It is not enough to send people out the door with completed applications. Each individual will be followed up to make sure the application has been mailed in and the applicant has connected with appropriate educational resources.

Volunteers arrived from throughout the state to help applicants complete their applications and to take photos and fingerprints. California Rural Legal Assistance was there to answer questions for those who had potential legal complications.

Although the media has put much emphasis on the upcoming loss of benefits for legal permanent residents, most applicants are more concerned about having a voice. With all the anti-immigrant legislation that is being passed, immigrants are seeing the need to become citizens so they can vote.

Because of the great need and excitement generated by the citizenship project, there will be other citizenship days planned for the future. Interested in getting involved? Call Roberta Ritchie at (w) 453-6526 or (h) 224-6033. Labor/Community Alliance Labor Party (Frank Little Chapter) P.O. Box 5077 Fresno, CA 93755

Address Correction Requested

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Vol	lunteers	tor	Jus	stice

Yes, I pledge to work for justice! I am ready to take on the bosses, the politicians, and to fight for workers' rights. I will do at least one activity a month.

Name			
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Address			
Phone: (H)		(W)	
E-mail			
Picket Lines, I Legislative Ca Organizing D Food Drives Electoral Cam	rives	nes	
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Morning	Afternoon	Evening	
Signature		— — Date	

A Call to Action

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

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

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

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

Frank Little Chapter P.O. Box 5077 Fresno, CA 93755 (209)226-2078 Fax c/o Pam Whalen: 277-6709 E-mail: clr2@igc.apc.org