

Calendar of Events ~ June 1997

Tuesday, June 3

Video Night, 7 p.m., Fresno Center for Nonviolence, 985 N. Van Ness. "The Peace Pilgrim."

Saturday, June 14

Fresno Center for Nonviolence Board Meeting, 9:30 a.m., 985 N. Van Ness. Guests welcome.

Sunday, June 15

Deadline for submission of information for July issue of *Labor/Community Alliance*. Call 226-2078 for information.

Monday, June 16

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

Tuesday, June 17

Health Care for All, 7:15-9 p.m., Fresno Center for Nonviolence, 985 N. Van Ness. Call 255-6473.

Thursday, June 19

Juneteenth Day: African-American celebration honoring the day in 1865 when slaves in Texas and Louisiana finally heard they were free—two months after the end of the Civil War.

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

Saturday, June 21

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), 10 a.m., Fresno Center for Nonviolence, 985 N. Van Ness. Call 229-9661.

Sunday, June 22

Gay Pride Day

Fresno Center for Nonviolence Anniversary

Sunday, June 22

5 p.m. 985 N. Van Ness

**"Strengthening the Relationship between
Community Activism and Labor"**

- ~ Speakers from the Labor/Community Alliance and United Farm Workers
- ~ Presentation of the annual "Way of Peace" awards
- ~ Free food provided by Food Not Bombs

Call 332-2998 or 266-2559

Wednesday, June 25

Central Labor Council delegates, 6 p.m., SEIU office. Call 275-1404.

Saturday, June 28

Earth Aid '97

Saturday, June 28

11 a.m.-8 p.m.

Roeding Park, Eucalyptus Grove

~information booths ~open mike

~guest speakers ~poetry reading

Call 448-9652

Sunday, June 29

Artes Americas lecture/slide presentation, "Los Maya," Vicente Murphy, 2 p.m.

Monday, June 30

Labor Party, Frank Little Chapter

Fresno Center for Nonviolence

Monday, June 30 5:30 p.m.

985 N. Van Ness

(between Olive and Belmont)

Call 226-2078 for information.

Everyone is welcome.

Ongoing Activities/Events

Artes Americas exhibit: "Abajo del Vocan," works of Mayan artists of San Pedro La Laguna and display of contemporary Mayan textiles; through July 13.

Weekly

Monday-Friday: The Living Room, support and referral resource center for people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. Noon to 5 p.m., Fresno Center for Nonviolence, 985 N. Van Ness. Call 485-3667.

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

Goodbye Overtime?

by Chris Townsend, Labor Party Press

The "Working Families Flexibility Act," introduced in the House January 7 and assigned the bill number HR#1, has already been passed by the full House. It would allow employers to offer hourly employees compensatory time off in lieu of overtime pay.

The bill's sponsor is Republican Rep. Cass Ballenger, a simple factory owner from North Carolina, who refers to the proposal as a "long overdue change." Bosses like Cass have been trying to repeal the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) since it was passed in 1938. This is the slickest attempt yet. Worse, the nation's chief Democrat, Bill Clinton, has endorsed the concept of the bill—although not, at this moment, the Ballenger version.

The Senate version of the bill, introduced by Sen. John Ashcroft (R-MO), has an even more ridiculous name: "The Family Friendly Workplace Act." And it would go even further by, among other things, replacing the 40-hour work-week with an 80-hour two-week standard, allowing employers to press workers into back-breaking overtime over the course of a single week.

Of course, the bill's big-business sponsors insist, this is all strictly voluntary: Under both bills, exercising the comp time option would be only by mutual agreement of employer and employee.

Don't believe it for a minute.

A corporate lobbyist blew it during hearings on the Senate bill in mid-February: She gave away the real motive for this bill. Susan Eckerly of the National Federation of Independent

told a **By putting Mom's picture on the front of this bill, proponents have put a human face on this otherwise evil-sounding proposal.**

Businesses Senate Labor man Re-sub-commit-small business "can't afford their em-

ployees overtime. This [flextime] is something they can offer in exchange that gives them a benefit." That is, under this bill, employers will have the option of not paying us overtime. An embarrassed Eckerly later told reporters she wished she could take back her comments.

Here's the way the bill would work. Say you work fifty hours this week. The boss—if she or he feels like it—will bank 15 hours of "time off" for you, instead of paying for 15 hours of overtime. Down the road, as long as you give "reasonable" notice, you can take some of your saved-up time off—as long as you don't "disrupt" the boss's business. Boss will even let you save up to 240 hours of time, promising to pay you at the end of the twelve month period (that s/he picks out) for all the time you weren't allowed to use during the year.

Under the Senate bill, the boss could calculate your overtime over a two-week period instead of the current one. So Boss makes you work 55 hours this week, cuts you back to 25 hours next week, and pays you for a straight 40 hours both weeks. Only if you "volunteer" for the special treatment, of course. Welcome to the "family friendly" world of comp time, where the boss is once again in complete control of your life!

Apart from the Eckerly blooper, the friends of big business have done a good job promoting this scheme. In hearing after hearing, they've trucked in working moms to tell Congressional committees that repealing overtime pay will give them more flexibility. Like the woman from an unorganized Timken roller bearing plant in North Carolina, who told the legislators that comp time instead of overtime "would benefit workers. This would allow all workers the flexibility for themselves and self-directed work teams in the workplace. In a self-directed work team environment . . . [the current requirement that wage workers get overtime] may create a situation where the team members will not feel equal." Nothing—not even overtime pay—should get in the way of our feelings of solidarity with management!

By putting Mom's picture on the front of this bill, proponents have put a human face on this otherwise evil-sounding proposal. Too many of our own allies in and out of the labor movement have been confused and disarmed by the "we-only-want-flexibility" arguments.

We have to ask some tough questions about this bill. For starters:

- ➡ Who really decides when earning comp time is "voluntary"?
- ➡ Who decides what constitutes "reasonable notice" when trying to take comp time?
- ➡ How on earth would a single worker (especially an unorganized one) force the boss to let them earn or use comp time?
- ➡ What will prevent any boss from forcing workers to use their comp time to fill in for short periods of slack time, rather than temporarily laying them off so they can receive unemployment benefits instead of nothing while they're off?
- ➡ What happens to a worker's accumulated comp time if the company goes bankrupt?
- ➡ If this bill passes, how long will it take before bosses move to stop paying us all types of leave, sick, and vacation time unless it's been "earned"?

You can make your opinion heard on Capitol Hill by calling your lawmakers toll-free (compliments of the AFL-CIO): 1-800-LABOR21.