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# C A L I F O R N I A LABOR NEWS

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JAY DONNELLY



Actor Martin Sheen, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, UFW President Arturo Rodriguez, Rev. Jesse Jackson, UFW Secretary-Treasurer Dolores Huerta, AFL-CIO Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson, and AFSCME President Gerald McEntee led the march.

## Farm Workers March on Watsonville

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**M**ore than 30,000 people marched through the town of Watsonville on Sunday, April 13, to support the organizing efforts of strawberry workers.

In one of the largest workers' marches in recent years, union members, strawberry workers, community activists and religious leaders formed a two and a half mile column through the heart of California's strawberry country.

The crowd sang, chanted, waved signs, and called on growers to respect workers' basic rights to living wages, clean drinking water, decent working conditions and an end to sexual harassment.

Delegations from 26 unions, 25 central labor councils and 18 state federations marched in Watsonville.

Thousands of strawberry workers marched, fueled by a sense of justice.

"I work stooped over 8 to 10 hours a day," said Delfina

Garcia, a 43-year-old mother of eight who earns \$8,000 to \$9,000 a year. "We often have to work in mud and can't take simple breaks."

"Sometimes I feel like a donkey," said Isabel Rendon, a picker for eight years.

"I want to tell all the strawberry workers: this is enough!" said Jose Rojas, who hasn't had a raise in seven years. "We are uniting for all the workers and their families." ■

More photos are on page 3.



## NEWS FROM THE FIELD

### K-Mart Boycott

Bay Area locals of the United Food and Commercial Workers have called for a boycott of all K-Mart outlets to protest the company's national union-busting policies, its intimidation of workers at the new Super K-Mart store in East Oakland, and its refusal to meet area standards for wages and benefits.

The boycott is spearheaded by UFCW Local 428, San Jose, and Local 870, Oakland. The Oakland local made a determined effort to organize employees at the Super-K last year but ran into a solid wall of company opposition: the whole nine yards, with anti-union "consultants" flooding the store, firing of pro-union employees, threats, intimidation and surveillance.

"They poisoned the well pretty thoroughly," said Local 870 President Richard Benson. "We have no real choice but to shut them down."

In San Jose, after carefully watching the Oakland experience, Local 428 moved directly to a boycott.

The locals are working closely with a coalition of community organizations to spread the word about K-Mart's policies.

### Kaiser Employees Strike

Twenty-five thousand Kaiser employees in Northern California stayed home April 16 to support a one-day strike called by the California Nurses Association.

7,500 Registered Nurses struck to ask Kaiser to "put patients first." The nurses called on Kaiser officials to return to the bargaining table to develop a settlement protecting professional nursing standards and safe, quality patient care.

Local unions turned out in force to support the nurses. 87% of the employees at Healthcare Workers Local #250 SEIU supported the strike by walking off the job.

Central Labor Councils throughout the Bay Area played an instrumental role in supporting the strike. More than ten thousand people marched in front of Kaiser hospitals and clinics.

The nurses have been working without a contract since January 30. Management is requesting a 15% pay cut for 40% of nurses.

### Worker Safety at Risk

According to the latest ergonomic standards approved by the Cal-OSHA Standards Board, an employer would be allowed to kill or cripple two employees through repetitive strain injuries before any regulations affected him. Hundreds of thousands of workers in California would have no protection because employers of fewer than 10 persons would be exempt.

Once again, the Governor and the Cal-OSHA Standards Board are trying to evade a legislative mandate to prevent repetitive strain and cumulative trauma injuries.

The California Labor Federation has sued the Board to force adoption of meaningful ergonomics safety regulations.

The suit is set for a hearing Aug. 4 in Sacramento Superior Court.

The latest revision was approved April 17 in Sacramento

after board members heard Tom Rankin, Federation president, denounce the changes as "purely cosmetic."

The Federation sued last year to force compliance with the legislative mandate and won a court order requiring the Standards Board to take action. Inadequacies of the standard finally produced by the board haven't been addressed because the document was so "vague and unenforceable" the Office of Administrative Law rejected it, and legal action was suspended pending revision.

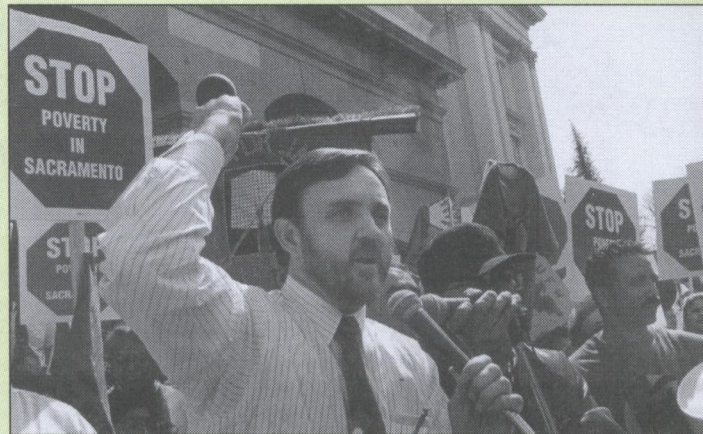
The revised standard corrects none of the faults over which the Federation is suing, Rankin pointed out.

### Union Summer is Back

Once again, the AFL-CIO is planning to bring hundreds of workers and college students into the streets and neighborhoods to work on union organizing campaigns. To participate or learn more, call 1-800-952-2550.



## Art Pulaski Speaks Out



### Talking to Workers About the 8-Hour Day

The state of California passed the eight-hour day before any other state, in 1868, as the result of labor organizing and lobbying. The union movement cut its teeth fighting for the eight-hour day.

So it is fitting that in 1997, with the eight-hour day under attack from the Governor, the Republican party, the employers and the Industrial Welfare Commission, the eight-hour day may again become a rallying cry for union activists.

We're fighting back against anti-worker policies. The day the IWC eliminated daily overtime, I signed a legal challenge which goes to court in June. Labor is also supporting two bills in the legislature to restore daily overtime: AB 15 and SB 680, introduced by Wally Knox and Hilda Solis.

But the most important part of our upcoming work will be our efforts to reach beyond the talking heads of pundits and professional politicians. This is an issue which resonates with California working people, no matter how jaded.

We must talk about the loss of the eight-hour day with union members and non-union workers, Soccer Moms and senior citizens, voters and apathetic non-voters throughout the state. Discussing the eight-hour day can help us build our political strength for 1998, just as it did for fledgling unions in the 19th century. ■

## CALIFORNIA LABOR NEWS

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Art Pulaski, Executive Secretary-Treasurer Tom Rankin, President

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## Scenes from Watsonville

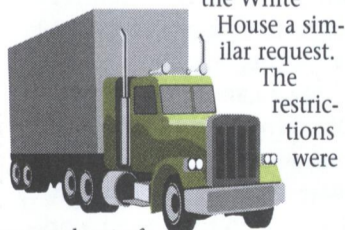
Photos by David Bacon



**Clockwise, from top right:** Three strawberry workers active in organizing union committees led the UFW march; the crowd cheers and waves flags; Alfredo Figueroa traveled from Blythe to Watsonville to support the strawberry campaign; students from Claremont College in Pomona hold signs along the march.

### NAFTA: The Truck Stops Here

Days after a truck from Mexico crashed into a row of cars in Los Angeles, killing four people, the Los Angeles City Council April 1 adopted a resolution urging President Clinton to retain restrictions on such vehicles entering the United States. The City Council joins 201 members of Congress who sent the White



House a similar request. The restrictions were imposed out of job, safety and environmental concerns about trucking provisions contained in the North American Free Trade Agreement.

The NAFTA debate has reopened as the Clinton administration prepares to ask Congress for "fast track" negotiating authority to bring Chile into NAFTA without protecting jobs or the environment.

### San Mateo Elects Labor-Friendly Supervisor

In a special election held in San Mateo county Tuesday, April 8, union members turned out by the thousands to vote for Richard Gordon for county Supervisor. Gordon will fill the seat vacated by State Assembly member Ted Lempert.

The San Mateo Labor Council contacted over 24,000 union members by phone, personal visit or mail in a six-week period.

The election marked the first time San Mateo unions ran an independent expenditure campaign for their chosen candidate.

### HAPPY MAY DAY!

May 1 is May Day, or International Workers Day, which commemorates the historical struggle of working people around the world. May 1 is also the day when the International Association of Machinists was founded in 1888, and the birthday of renowned labor organizer Mary Harris "Mother" Jones, born in 1830.

### Building Partnerships

The California Labor Federation Workers Assistance Program will hold its "Building Partnerships" Conference May 19 - 21 in Palm Springs, California.

The conference will include workshops and presentations on work force development, welfare reform, the apprenticeship system, school-to-career and much more.

For more information, please call Tony Castillo: (415) 395-9091.

### ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE!

How do we meet the challenge of organizing hundreds of thousands of new members? Join AFL-CIO President John Sweeney for a one-day workshop in Los Angeles on Wednesday, May 14. For more information, call Eric Chaudron at (213) 381-5611 x21 or Sharon Cornu at (415) 292-1400.

### Up & Coming

**May 1-4:** A. Philip Randolph Inst. 16th Annual Statewide Conference, Oakland. Call Don Hightower at (415) 986-3585.

**May 9:** E. Bay CLUW honors Judy Goff. Call Kerry Newkirk, (510) 893-8766.

**May 10:** National Association of Letter Carriers Food Drive. Call Bud Biscardo (703) 683-7833.

**May 14:** AFL-CIO Regional Organizing Conference in Los Angeles. Call Eric Chaudron: (213) 381-5611 x21.

**May 16:** San Mateo COPE banquet roasts Art Pulaski. Call (415) 572-8848.

**May 18:** Last day to visit Oakland Museum's exhibit on the 1946 Oakland General Strike. Union members half price. 1000 Oak Street.

**July 13 - Aug. 8:** 1997 Western Semester Program of George Meany Center, San Diego. Call (301) 431-6400.

**July 16 - 20:** Western Women's Institute, AFL-CIO summer school for union women. Call (202) 637-5331.



# Defending Overtime Pay in the Streets and in the Courts

**T**he battle over Gov. Pete Wilson's campaign to kill daily overtime pay is moving into the courts.

A writ of mandate obtained in San Francisco Superior Court by the California Labor Federation says the Industrial Welfare Commission must either rescind its 3-2 vote to end overtime pay or appear in court on June 13 to respond to labor's suit.

The no-overtime regulation is expected to become effective next January 1.

Labor's suit argues that the IWC majority—all Wilson appointees—have no authority to overrule the legislature. In 1980 legislators codified an

IWC ruling supported by labor that gives workers the right to vote on alternative work schedules, such as a week consisting of four 10-hour days. Last year, legislation abolishing overtime pay after eight hours was rejected by both Assembly and Senate.

"Bureaucracy can't cancel democracy," declared Art Pulaski, executive secretary-treasurer of the California Labor Federation. "A regulatory agency like the IWC has no authority to deny the will of the democratically elected legislature."

The IWC voted April 11 during a meeting in San Francisco marked by protest and arrests. The California Labor Federation enacted a mock "Funeral for the 8-Hour Day" before the meeting, complete with casket, tombstones and hearse. Hundreds of angry protesters filled the meeting

room, and three were arrested by the California Highway Patrol.

Voting against the changes in overtime were Chuck Center of the State Council of Laborers, one of two labor representatives on the IWC, and John McCarthy, a college professor who represents the general public.

Voting "yes" were Syed Alam, the other labor representative, and the two employer representatives: Chair Robyn Black, an agribusiness executive, and Cynthia Neff, an IBM executive. Alam has voted consistently with the employer representatives since Wilson appointed him last year.

Government, the unaffiliated union that represents engineers in several state agencies. He withdrew from PECG after the union took a policy position opposed by Wilson, but reinstated his membership before the governor's office announced his appointment to the IWC.

In a deposition, Alam admitted he did not know what AFL-CIO stood for and said he thought George Meany was president of the California Labor Federation. He was unable to identify a single union by its initials. Alam's own union has said he does not represent them.

In making their decision on April 11, the IWC majority relied on a report from the right-wing Hoover Institute contending California workers will be better off without overtime pay. In fact, ending overtime would transfer more than a billion dollars a year from workers to employers.

The Hoover Institute report was sprung by the Wilson Administration in Los Angeles on April 4 during the last of three tumultuous public hearings. Protesters estimated to number as many as 5,000 rallied outside the L.A. State Building.

The Hoover report echoed employer arguments that abolition of overtime pay will be good for families and help workers economically.

The federation responded with a critique by Lonnie Golden, Penn State University labor economist, who observed the Hoover report makes "peculiar assumptions regarding workers' well-being."

Golden cited harms of longer hours per day and more days per week, including loss of time for family, school and volunteering. He warned: "Ultimately, workers face a great risk of having longer hours of work for about the same pay—hardly a family-friendly policy." ■

GREG CASTILLO



Father Bill O'Donnell presides over a funeral for the 8-hour day in San Francisco, April 11.

The Senate later voted to reject the nomination of both Black and Alam, whose appointments require confirmation. The Senate voted April 24 to reject the two Wilson appointees.

Alam, an engineer who designs prisons for the California Department of Corrections, is a member of Professional Engineers in California

*Netsy Firestein, Labor Project for Working Families*

## The Family-Friendly Union

**K**now your rights! Under federal law, you now have the right to take time off if you have or adopt a baby (whether you are mother or father), or to care for your child, parent or spouse who is seriously ill or for your own serious health condition. If you qualify, you can take up to 12 weeks a year off and be guaranteed the same or equivalent job when you return.

This new law is the federal Family and Medical Leave Act.

But the leave is unpaid. Many workers won't take time off because they can't afford it.

Sen. Hilda Solis has proposed state legislation (SB 164) which would allow workers taking family leave to receive state disability payments at the same time. Workers pay into the disability fund; why not be able to get paid time off when you have a family emergency? Or when you have to care for a kid with asthma or a parent with Alzheimers? This bill would benefit workers and their families.

What about other family issues at work? What about child care and flexible hours, coping with a sick child or dealing with a mother who needs a nursing home? These are all **union** issues.

These are issues to be discussed at union meetings and organizing drives and bargained at the negotiating table.

The Labor Project for Working Families, created by the Bay Area Labor Councils, helps unions bring family issues into the union workplace. For more information or to receive our quarterly newsletter, call us at (510) 643-6814. ■

*Guest Column*