

AFL-CIO Calls For Big Improvement In FLSA Coverage

"It is bad enough to be poor because of unemployment. It is even worse to suffer poverty — the grinding, demeaning poverty of 35 or 50 or 75 cents an hour — while hard at work in a useful occupation," an AFL-CIO representative declared in urging Congress to extend the Fair Labor Standards Act to 2.7 million workers.

Speaking in behalf of legislative director Andrew J. Biemiller, Kenneth Meiklejohn, an AFL-CIO legislative representative, also urged Congress to add a ceiling on hours to the minimum wage coverage of 1.9 million workers who at present are only partially protected by the law.

The Administration has proposed legislation to extend FLSA coverage to 735,000 more workers and to remove the overtime exemption from most groups now excluded. These proposals are contained in a bill introduced by Rep. James Roosevelt (D-Calif.).

Speaking before a House Labor Subcommittee, Meiklejohn urged expansion of the bill to "go farther along the road . . . toward legal safeguards for those wage-earners who are most in need of them."

"What possible excuse can there be for paying a laundry worker or a hotel dishwasher less than 50 cents an hour?" he asked.

Specifically, labor appealed for ex-

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Fed Raps Agribusiness Scheme To Lure Out-of-State Jobless As Irresponsible

A searing indictment charging California's corporate farm interests with promoting a "fantastically irresponsible" plan to lure some 40,000 families from depressed areas throughout the nation into the state for seasonal farm work to perpetuate the adverse effect the now doomed bracero program has had on farm wage rates and working conditions was

laid before a special federal-state hearing on farm problems in Sacramento last Friday by the state AFL-CIO leader Thos. L. Pitts.

The impending demise of Public Law 78 affords the state a "golden opportunity for solving California's largest and most notorious socio-economic dilemma," Pitts declared.

But the "country slicker publicists" for the "Montgomery Street farmers" are attempting to stampede state and federal agencies into "an approach that would greatly aggravate the problem while significantly increasing the taxpayers' direct burden and compounding hard core unemployment in our cities," he charged.

Speaking at the hearing called by Governor Edmund G. Brown and cosponsored by U. S. Under Secretary of Labor John F. Henning, Pitts, secretary-

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Statewide COPE Convention April 8

Calling attention to the forthcoming Pre-primary Election Endorsement Convention of the California Labor Council on Political Education in San Francisco on Wednesday, April 8, 1964, Secretary-Treasurer Thos. L. Pitts, reminded local unions and central bodies this week that the deadline for the receipt of resolutions and proposed amendments to the Constitution is Tuesday, March 24, 1964. The convention will be held in California Hall at 65 Polk Street. Convention headquarters will be at Del Webb's TowneHouse at 8th and Market Sts.



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Secretary-Treasurer

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
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Pitts Urges Faster Pace In Registration Drive For Voters For June 2 Primary

"Working men and women throughout the state must be alerted to the fact that the forthcoming primary election on June 2 is by no means any kind of a second-class election. Many critical choices, particularly for state Senate and Assembly seats, will be irrevocably determined on that date," Thos. L. Pitts, state AFL-CIO leader said this week.

Pointing out that there are just 17 weekdays left before the close of voter registration on Thursday, April 9, Pitts urged both local union and county COPE organizations to step up the pace of their pre-primary voter registration drives.

"Reactionary forces are on the march in California as they have never been before. They have already commandeered two key statewide bastions of one of our two major political parties, and this has merely whetted their appetite for power.

"But we in organized labor must not

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Anti-Rumford Act Factions Seek To Force June Vote

When will the people vote on the segregation initiative to repeal the Rumford Fair Housing Act?

This was the key question confronting the concurrent budget and special sessions of the State Legislature this week as the state's lawmakers grappled with school financing and school district unification proposals, the state-city split of the Long Beach Tidelands Oil revenues, and a proposed state budget now totaling \$3.67 billion for the 1964-65 fiscal year.

Promoters of the initiative that would prevent the state or local governments from enacting measures to help dimin-

Urgent

Contact your State Senator and Assemblyman today to urge them to keep the anti-Rumford Act initiative off the June 2 ballot.

ish racial and religious discrimination were apparently trying to line up support to seek to block action on the budget until the proposed \$260 million school construction bond issue is placed on the June primary ballot.

Legislative counsel A. C. Morrison has ruled that if any statewide bond issue is placed on the primary ballot, the anti-Rumford initiative, which is being pushed by the state's realty salesmen and apartment house owners, would automatically go on the same ballot.

The anti-Rumford Act factions evidently believe that the smaller turnout to be expected at the primary, coupled with the brief time available for the voters to gain an adequate understanding of the initiative petition, en-

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Anti-Rumford Act Factions Seek To Force June Vote

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hances their initiative's chance for passage.

Assemblyman John G. Veneman (Rep.-Modesto) claimed Monday that the state is already running short of school bond money and that if the school bond issue does not go to the voters in June there would be a long delay on local loan applications.

But Governor Brown rejected this claim the following day and said that he was now assured that there will be no double sessions in schools due to lack of money next fall.

Subsequently he said he wants the legislature to place the segregation initiative, the \$260 million school bond issue, a \$360 million bond issue for state universities and colleges, and a \$150 million beaches and parks bond issue on the November ballot.

The proposed state budget cleared the Assembly Ways and Means Committee for floor action late Tuesday but no final action from the lower house is expected before early next week. The Senate version was still tied up in the Senate Finance Committee.

The inability of the lower house committee to effect any substantial budget cuts appears to preclude any increase in state aid to public schools beyond the \$41.9 million already provided in the Governor's budget, except through passage of one of the several bills now being considered in the special session. School officials and others have been pressing for expansion of state school aid funds by as much as \$100 million.

SPECIAL SESSION IN OFFING

With the budget session required by law to adjourn by Easter Sunday, March 29, and with indications mounting that the GOP bloc in the legislature may refuse to approve the budget in an effort to force the bond issues on the primary ballot, there is a growing possibility that the Governor may be obliged to call a special session to wind up action on the budget after Easter.

Any action to force the bond issues—and therewith the anti-Rumford Act initiative—on the June 2 ballot must be taken by April 10 at the latest, state officials said.

A measure seeking to resolve the city-state dispute over the Long Beach tidelands oil revenues (AB 132) was introduced late this week. The Long Beach tidelands were entrusted to the city by the state in 1911 before oil was discovered there. With estimates of the future revenue to flow from the fields ranging from \$1 billion to \$3 billion, the state legislators are seeking to channel a much larger chunk of these revenues

Pitts Urges Faster Pace In Registration Drive For Voters For June 2 Primary

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make the mistake of believing these forces are interested in capturing only a few high state or federal offices. They are actively gunning for every post they see even an outside chance of snaring.

"The primary is the place where we must separate the responsible candidates from the political opportunists, and where good candidates encounter their toughest opposition due to the multiplicity of candidates on the ballot. It is a matter of urgency that the men and women in the California labor movement pull together—and pull hard—to prevent the extremists and other canny, ultra-conservative groups from dividing us and decimating our potential vote in the primary," Pitts declared.

"Thanks to an earlier start," he said, "reports from the field indicate that a number of local and county COPE organizations are in better shape today than they were in the corresponding pre-primary period two years ago. But even these organizations—as well as a few in which the pre-primary voter registration drive has not yet gotten off the ground—are sorely in need of volunteer workers.

CHANCE TO DO SOMETHING

"Thinking citizens who recognize the need for such things as medical care for the aged through social security and a meaningful assault on the provinces of poverty in our midst have a real opportunity in the forthcoming election to do something about it."

"I hope they will," he added. "The sooner we all recognize that we help ourselves by helping others, the sooner the social and economic problems confronting us can be resolved."

In citing some of the reasons why union members, their families and friends should be active in politics, Pitts declared:

"Just in terms of state labor law, we need legislation to remove the glaring omissions which operate to negate the state's basic policy favoring the development of stable, constructive and peaceful labor-management relations.

"In the social insurance field, California's unemployment insurance program is failing both the jobless worker and the economy in a period of greatest

into the state's general fund for schools and other statewide needs.

The measure reportedly calls for reducing the city's share to 18 percent, with the remaining 82 percent to go to the state. At present the revenues are split on a 50-50 basis.

The school district unification proposals (see News Letter February 28, 1964) also include provisions to expand state support for schools. AB 46, for example would provide \$75 million in additional aid.

need. The program has been held down to a point where it is providing compensation for only about 20 to 30 percent of wages lost through unemployment, because of exclusions from coverages of about 45 percent of the unemployed and a grossly inadequate level of benefits. Clearly there is a crying need for substantial updating of this program as well as significant improvements in our unemployment disability insurance and workmen's compensation programs.

"Likewise, in the field of civil rights, where we are working to prevent the realty interests' efforts to make the word California synonymous with bigotry, union members, both as individuals and as trade unionists, have a vital moral, social and economic stake in the forthcoming primary as well as the general election," Pitts pointed out.

"Responsible civic action now to register voters and to firm up plans to get out the vote on June 2 can pay off handsomely in terms of social and economic progress next year," he said.

Pitts also urged union members to make use of their right to vote by absentee ballot. Applications for absentee voters' ballots may be submitted starting April 3.

The ballots will be mailed out by County Clerks during the period from May 4 through May 26. Absentee ballots must be returned to, and in the hands of, the County Clerks by 5 p.m., June 1.

Union members need not necessarily be absent from their precinct on election day to vote by absentee ballot, Pitts said. They need only "expect" to be unable to vote in their precinct on election day to use an absentee ballot, he explained.

"Thus if a worker needs to leave for his jobsite before the polls open and expects to be unable to return for any reason before they close, he should be urged to take advantage of his absentee voting rights," Pitts said.

BARKAN CITES KEY RACES

At a recent tri-state national COPE conference in Sacramento, national COPE Director Al Barkan told the delegates that the fate of organized labor's national goals in social and economic fields will pivot substantially on the outcome of some 84 key Congressional races this year. Fourteen to 16 of these key seats are in California, he said.

The conference, which was attended by some 400 delegates, set forth the following registration drive goals:

1 — A union registrar in every AFL-CIO local union.

2 — Door-to-door registration drives in worker precincts as well as at plants to sign up workers and eligible voters in their families.

3 — Close coordination and co-operation between local COPEs and women's auxiliaries.

Fed Raps Agribusiness Scheme To Lure Out-of-State Jobless as 'Irresponsible'

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treasurer of the California Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, went straight to the heart of the matter when he pointed out "that the responsibility for attracting and holding a labor force belongs in this industry, as in all others, to the employers alone."

"This responsibility can be met by agribusiness fundamentally only by beginning the job of becoming competitive with other American employers in terms of the wages and working conditions it offers," Pitts added.

At the outset, Pitts made it clear that in labor's view, the issues involved in the end of the bracero program have little to do with most of California's 99,000 farmers.

"When we talk about responsibility regarding wages particularly, we are talking essentially about the 4.9 percent of these farmers who . . . hired a full 61.1 percent of the entire farm labor force," he explained.

Conversely, he added, labor believes that "the great majority of our working farmers, who employ little or no hired labor at all, would benefit greatly from improved farm prices resulting from... any significant wage increase."

This is because only the huge corporate farms—where the grower-processor-distributor interests are all under one roof—would be obliged to cut back production due to higher costs resulting from a significant wage increase, he said. But the smaller independent farmer who puts a lot of his own labor into his product would benefit substantially due to the increased value of his own labor, he indicated.

Noting that just a few weeks ago, the corporate farm interests claimed they were renouncing any intention to seek an extension of the bracero program in deference to the will of the people and the growers' alleged desire to help ease the state's severe unemployment problem, the AFL-CIO leader said that "the cynical and deliberate events of each succeeding day since that time" have demonstrated that this pronouncement was "nothing more than the opening gimmick in a clever, new public relations campaign aimed minimally at the bracero program's permanent renewal."

Since then, Pitts said, the public has been deluged with stories disclosing that 1000 workers were already enroute from Texas to a Los Angeles farm labor association; that the corporate growers were setting up interstate recruitment machinery to lure Puerto Rican, Pennsylvanian and West Virginian jobless families to the state; and that they were also demanding that governmental agencies abet their nationwide recruitment schemes; and finally word leaked

out that they were even making discreet inquiries about the use of convict labor.

These alarms, coupled with demands that the State figure out just how much California's taxpayers "must lay on the line" to provide "the select little group of growers" with "their transplanted labor supply," are merely part of "a top notch Madison Avenue public relations job designed to make us yearn for the good old bracero days even before they have taken their absence," Pitts said.

This "thoroughly incredible" campaign is "aimed at maintaining the lowest possible wage levels and conditions by replacing the bracero with his closest American counterpart, namely, the hopeless unemployed from the nation's most depressed areas no matter what the cost to the rest of the community," Pitts asserted.

"State and federal governments must go far beyond a flat refusal to become party to this destructive strategy," he said.

In opening the conference, Governor Brown called on all conference participants "to keep in mind the fact that there are more than 400,000 unemployed in our state."

"Our job must be to make the fullest and most effective use of our labor supply right here in California. And to do this," he said, speaking pointedly to the agribusiness interests, "you may need to reappraise farm wages, health and retirement plans, housing and all the other fields that concern working men and women."

Commenting on a recent spotcheck he had made of farm labor communities in the state, the Governor said:

"Agricultural workers are among the lowest paid and the most poorly sheltered workers in the nation. They receive few of the benefits enjoyed by labor as a whole. Agriculture is not competitive in the labor market."

The Governor pledged the full support of all state agencies to assist both farm and labor organizations in meeting the problem of providing workers in 1965 to replace the braceros.

In response to the Governor's request for organized labor's views on such problem areas as housing, wages, transportation, recruitment (intra and interstate), labor-management relations, and the effect on farmers and consumers of possible increased costs, Pitts made the following points:

●—A housing bill currently before the special session, as presently drafted, would expand proposed subsidies to the growers and would result in "resurrecting the type of company-town housing practices which fell into such complete disrepute nationally long before the 1930s."

What is needed, he suggested, is a vast expansion of the "below-market inter-

Shun HIS Clothes, Union Requests

In your Easter shopping, shun any suit with the "HIS" label on it, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, AFL-CIO, request.

In announcing a step-up in its consumer boycott against men's and boys' wear made by Henry I. Siegel of Bruceton, Tennessee, the union explained that the firm, which used threats of discharge and plant closure and racist appeals to defeat the union, was subsequently found guilty of unfair labor practices by the National Labor Relations Board. The NLRB has since ordered a new election. "Please don't buy HIS clothing," the union asks.

est" program in the 1961 Housing Act to make it more applicable to the needs of rural communities and to permit development of single family dwelling units on an ownership as well as rental basis for modest income groups by eligible non-profit organizations, limited dividend corporations and public agencies. Any realistic approach to a housing program, he said, must be oriented toward establishing a permanent home base for farm families free of any opportunity for grower control.

●—On the issue of wages, Pitts pointed out that State and federal officials must recognize that "the cumulative adverse effects of the bracero program cannot even be measured, let alone corrected," until "the normal forces of a free labor market can be permitted to start cancelling them out." The government can no longer afford "to wet-nurse the giants of this industry," Pitts declared.

●—Turning to the transportation and intra and interstate recruitment problems, Pitts warned that the agribusiness interests' "intensified interstate recruitment" campaign could indeed result in "a potential 'Grapes of Wrath' situation" if state and federal agencies fail to act quickly to restrain "these employers from unscrupulous actions seriously detrimental to the entire community."

"The overwhelming portion of the recruitment of a domestic farm labor force to replace the braceros can and must be done from within California's existing labor supply," he said.

In refuting the agribusiness claim that California workers won't do stoop labor as simply untrue, Pitts pointed out that at the peak of the 1963 farm labor season, 68 percent of the total of 308,850 hired farm workers in the state—almost 211,000 in all—were local residents em-

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Fed Cites Ways To Replace Braceros From Within State's Own Resources

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played on either a seasonal or year-round basis.

The point here, he emphasized, is that despite "the low wages and disgraceful conditions" confronting domestic farm workers, "over 244,000 Californians did in fact work at seasonal or year-round jobs in this industry last year at peak season in competition with foreign labor and at wages generally geared to the braceros' \$1.00 or \$1.10 hourly rates for field work."

In underscoring the dangers inherent in the growers' nationwide recruitment plan, Pitts pointed out that:

"Grower spokesmen themselves have estimated that those California farm workers now receiving 130 days of work per year would probably be reduced to about 90 days of work annually if 40,000 families were brought into the state for seasonal farm work."

If the growers' interstate recruitment drive is not restrained, it will result in less work and less income for the state's already impoverished farm workers "while freezing or even aggravating the presently adversely affected wages and working conditions" confronting them, he said.

The fact that there is a marked tendency for these interstate migrants to drift into urban areas in search of higher wage rates and better working conditions after one season in the farm areas would seriously compound the State's urban hard core unemployment problem, he pointed out.

The two central issues facing both the state and nation in connection with the end of the bracero program, Pitts said, are:

1—Correction of the primitive working conditions and the severely depressed annual incomes of California farm workers.

2—Replacement of a temporary foreign labor supply with a stabilized work force developed within California's own resources in adequate numbers to do the job.

To meet these issues, he said, if the public interest is to be safeguarded, "it is the clear duty of public employment agencies to utilize the union hiring hall as a central labor dispatching point on a referral basis in much the same manner that the state has conducted its relationship in the past with the employer associations under the bracero program."

He also called on State and Federal

government officials to act swiftly "to remove existing obstacles to orderly and effective employment stabilization processes" and to encourage democratic selection of a collective bargaining agent by the farm workers themselves.

In addition, he urged Governor Brown and the Secretary of Labor's office not only to refuse to relax State or Federal health, safety and other standards to accommodate the growers but to assure "fullest enforcement" of such standards because of the growers' "blatant disregard of the public welfare."

"After all the window dressing has been removed," the crux of the farm labor issue is linked directly to the fact that in 1962 California farmers expended \$526,300,000 to meet their hired labor needs. The great bulk of this hired farm labor bill was paid for by a mere handful of so-called "farmers."

"These interests know full well that unless they can concoct a domestic equivalent of the bracero program itself, the amount of their additional outlay to form workers would amount to a flat \$100 million annually if wages generally rose on a scale in line, for example, with that suggested by raising the common \$1.00 rate to only \$1.19 an hour," Pitts said.

"Again, the overwhelming bulk of this would be at the expense of the small family of growers whose more prominent members are listed on the New York Stock Exchange," he asserted.

"Can anyone doubt the lengths to which these vertically integrated agribusiness interests would go to preserve such lush stakes for their own purposes rather than applying them toward their long-postponed contribution to a war on their own workers' poverty, malnutrition, disease and housing conditions duplicable generally only in the most backward and undeveloped regions of the world?" the state AFL-CIO leader asked.

Asserting that organized labor has "no illusions over the intensity of this clash" over the growers' interstate recruitment campaign, Pitts declared:

"We can only hope that government and the general public will also remain fully alert to the complex of selfish considerations on the part of the small minority of private individuals serving as wellspring and inspiration for this wholly deplorable effort . . .

"It is quite obvious that management in agribusiness must be prodded sharply before they will learn to view

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tension of FLSA coverage to the following major groups:

Retail trade — Noting that the 1961 FLSA amendments brought 2.2 million retail employees under the wage-hour law provided their firms did \$250,000 in annual sales and were part of an enterprise doing at least \$1 million in annual business, the AFL-CIO suggested removing the \$1 million test. This would extend coverage to 674,000 more retail workers.

Restaurants — By applying the same \$250,000 sales standard to restaurants which are now totally excluded, 424,000 workers would be protected. It is estimated that some 55 percent of these employees are presently paid less than \$1.25 an hour.

Hotel - Motel — The AFL-CIO urged coverage for 274,000 workers in this field, some of whom earned less than 50 cents an hour.

Laundries — Pointing out that only 17,000 of the nation's 530,000 laundry workers are presently covered by FLSA, organized labor urged extension of coverage to 173,000 more. The Administration's bill would cover only 80,000 more.

Hospitals — Asserting that hospital employees urgently need FLSA coverage, the AFL-CIO urged coverage for 500,000 employees in both profit-making and non-profit hospitals.

Labor's statement also called for coverage for 55,000 workers in large motion picture theaters, 200,000 employees of non-profit institutions and additional groups of workers in small logging operations, agricultural processing and cotton ginning and miscellaneous services such as wholesaling.

It also asked for overtime coverage for 1.3 million local transit and other transportation employees who are currently guaranteed only the minimum wage, 534,000 in agricultural processing and seasonal industries, and 86,000 gas station employees.

the people in their labor force as normal human beings with everyday needs and aspirations for themselves and their children. Unless we satisfy some of these most basic elements, so common in any society, there can be neither dignity nor hope in the farm workers' total environment.

"To that extent, we as a nation, a state and a people are the poorer."

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