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California Unions Gear Up to Stop the Anti-Worker Initiative



From Sacramento to San Diego, union members are doing everything they can to stop the Anti-Worker Initiative which Pete Wilson is pushing to qualify for the June ballot.

They're handing out flyers to would-be signers in supermarket parking lots. They're arguing with petition circulators in downtown malls. They're telling people the real effects of the initiative, which is being touted as campaign

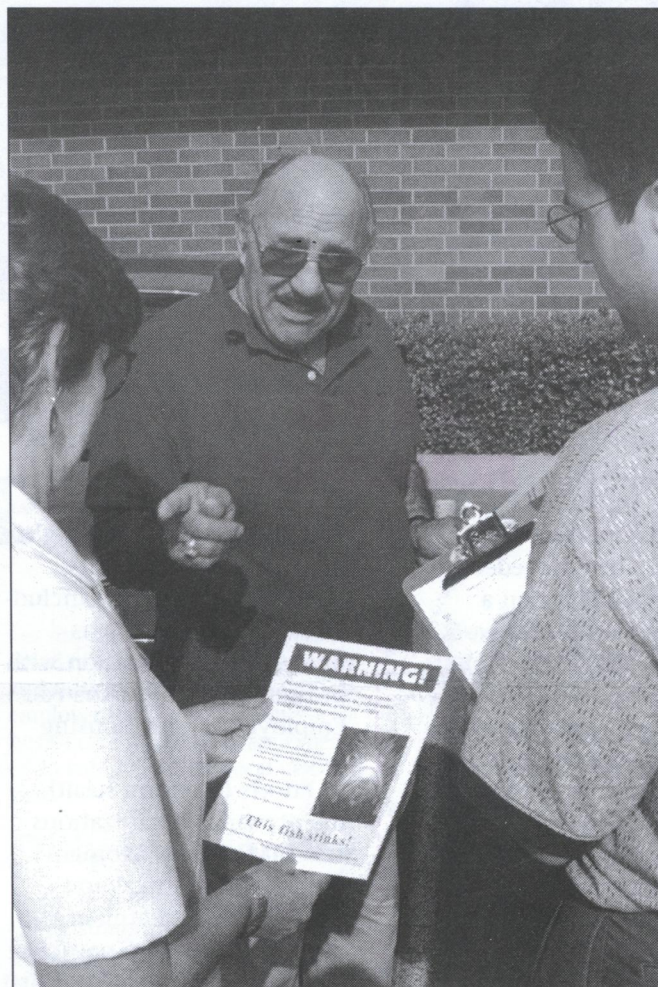
finance reform: it would take labor out of the political process in next year's elections.

"This initiative would silence the political voice of working people," warned Art Pulaski, Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the Labor Federation. "We'll fight like hell to stop it."

The Anti-Worker Initiative would require unions to receive annual written authorization from each union member before using that member's dues money for political purposes. It would violate the privacy rights of California workers, who would have to notify their boss about their political expenditures.

The net result: it would be much harder for unions to participate in politics to protect prevailing wage, restore daily overtime or fight privatization.

Enemies of labor are gathering to support the initiative. The Orange County extremists who wrote the initiative have now been joined by national ideologues with their own anti-labor agenda.



Sacramento Labor Council Secretary-Treasurer Rocky Oliveri explains the Anti-Worker Initiative to a potential signer.

Out of state backers of the initiative include J. Patrick Rooney, an Indianapolis insurance tycoon who is one of Newt Gingrich's largest donors, and Grover Norquist, a beltway libertarian who calls for the abolition of Social Security.

Governor Pete Wilson signed a letter sent with copies of the petition to hundreds of thousands of voters throughout the state. In his vicious letter, Wilson attacked unions as "political bosses of the state's most powerful special interest."

Meanwhile, the Federation is revving up a statewide effort to defeat the initiative. The Federation, CTA, AFSCME and the California School Employees Association have all provided staff to coordinate the public education efforts. SEIU and UFCW members are volunteering throughout the state. The Firefighters and the Operating Engineers have both donated printing.

If your union can help out, please contact your local labor council or Bill Camp at (916) 444-3676. ■

Wilson Sends Labor's Bills to Scrap Heap



atch out for that veto pen. Governor Wilson has scrapped more of labor's bills.

In August, Wilson axed AB 1167 (Floyd), which would have restored daily overtime regulations repealed by the Industrial Welfare Commission. In September, he killed the Federation's SB 680 (Solis), ending any hope this session to restore daily overtime pay after eight hours of work.

In October, the kill rate escalated. Wilson obliterated many more bills important to working people. Here's the veto carnage.

If not for Wilson's veto, unemployment insurance benefits would have been speeded up by basing eligibility on a claimant's most recent work experience. (SB 202, Solis)

Undocumented immigrants who already have contributed money through payroll taxes to the state Unemployment Compensation Disability Fund would have become eligible for disability insurance benefits. (AB 1153, Escutia)

Employers who willfully violate OSHA standards and cause the death or serious injury of an employee will continue to get away with it. AB 1015, Wally Knox's bill to increase penalties on such employers, also ran into the governor's veto.

Highway construction workers will remain at high risk. Wilson vetoed AB 140 (Baca), to require the Division of Occupational Safety and Health to develop recommendations for establishing standards for training flag people to control dangerous traffic better.

Wilson also axed AB 1568 (Floyd), which would have clarified the intent of existing law that bars subcontractors from public works jobs for up to three years for willfully vio-

lating prevailing wage provisions.

Speaking of public works, AB 494 (Migden) would have taken the penalties employers paid for failing to comply with public works labor law and used them to enforce those labor laws. Sound logical? Not to Wilson.

Despite the legislature's best efforts, firefighters may still be required to reimburse employers for expenses incurred during their hiring or training. (AB 958, Washington). And employers will be able to keep charging job applicants for processing their applications. (SB 447, Greene)

Vetoes also decimated progressive civil rights legislation. AB 257 (Vil-laraigosa) would have included sexual orientation as unlawful discrimination within the provisions of the Fair Employment and Housing Act.

Efforts to reform health maintenance organizations also bit the dust. Women receiving obstetrical and gynecological treatment will not be able to see a participating physician without first going through an HMO's "gatekeeper," usually a lesser trained doctor. (AB 1354, Davis)

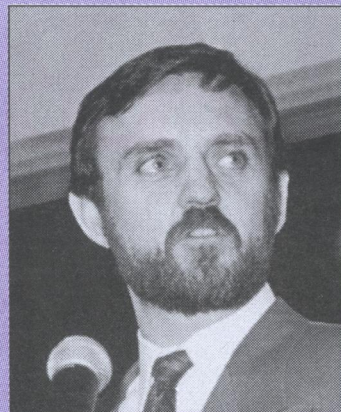
HMO's can continue to deny care to a patient without disclosing the basis for their decision or even administering a physical examination. (AB 794, Gallegos)

Wilson nixed a tenant protection bill, SB 682 (Sher), which would have allowed tenants who can't afford a rent increase to remain an extra 30 days at their old rent level to find and move to new housing.

The Governor also vetoed SB 48 (Solis), which would have allocated training funds to people thrown onto the job market by welfare "reform". ■



VETO ROUND-UP



Art Pulaski Speaks Out

With Enemies Like These Guys ...



ometimes the best proof that you're winning is that you provoke your enemies to take revenge.

The California labor movement has become increasingly effective in our political work, and now our enemies are striking back.

The Anti-Worker Initiative, written by three small-time extremists from Orange County, is now attracting national attention. Enemies of labor are lining up to join the attack on working people.

Governor Wilson has joined the campaign to silence working people's political voice. As one columnist wrote, his motto appears to be, "I Demonize, Therefore I Am."

The national extremists who support the Anti-Worker Initiative are a scary lot too. J. Patrick Rooney is an Indianapolis insurance executive who gives lots of money to Newt Gingrich. He'd like to eliminate Medicare and replace it with private insurance policies that his company sells.

Grover Norquist, president of Americans for Tax Reform, wants to get rid of Social Security, income taxes, welfare, immigrants (even legal ones) and unions.

We need to respond to this union-bashing by being smarter and more effective than ever. But we should also be flattered.

With enemies like these, we know we're on the right side. ■

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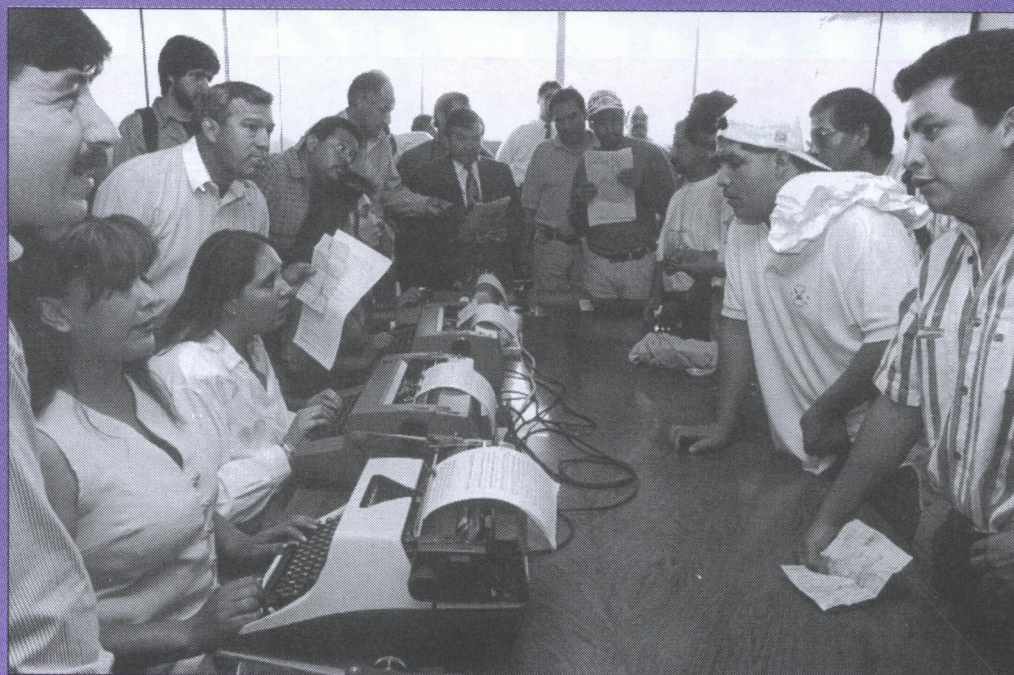
Foot-Dragging after Historic Election

On October 6, Tijuana workers at Han Young de Mexico voted for an independent labor federation, the Authentic Labor Front — the first time an independent union has won the right to represent workers at a maquiladora factory on the U.S./Mexican border.

The Tijuana office of the National Conciliation and Arbitration Board, however, has repeatedly postponed the hearing necessary to certify those results.

Company and government irregularities surrounding the vote led to a formal complaint in the United States under the labor side agreement of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

DAVID BACON



A worker from the Han Young factory votes for the independent union in a union election held at the offices of the Mexican labor board in Tijuana.



NEWS FROM THE FIELD

Up & Coming

Stompin' at the Savoy

Members of HERE Local 2850 are fighting to preserve their union contract and about 50 jobs at Walnut Creek's Savoy Restaurant, situated on city-owned Boundary Oak Golf Course. The City is evicting the current operator but so far has made no commitment to retain the union work force. Workers and their supporters jammed the chambers and presented a petition to the City Council demanding it "do whatever is necessary" to ensure they keep their union jobs. "I'm 45 years old," said Jeannie Northrup, a veteran bartender, "how am I going to compete with 25-year-olds if I have to look for another job?"

Livelihood

The folks who brought you "We Do the Work" are back, with a new TV show featuring working Americans and comic Will Durst.

"Livelihood" premieres Friday, November 21 on PBS. Check local listings for times. Don't miss it!

Strike Ends at Foster Farms

A strike at Foster Farms, the world's largest chicken processing plant, ended October 23 when workers voted 3-to-1 to accept a new five-year contract. Over 2,000 members of UFCW Local 1288 returned to work at the Livingston plant. The workers, who had been on strike since October 8, accepted a new company offer that sweetened a below cost of living 1.5 percent annual pay hike with a one-time bonus of \$1,500.

Add 100,000 LA Building Jobs

The Union Labor Life Insurance Company will join other major investors in a \$4 billion project expected to generate more than 100,000 jobs in the next decade. Union construction workers will build a master-planned community of 3,200 homes and 3.6 million square feet of office space. The all union-built Playa Vista will be situated in West Los Angeles enjoying scenic views of the Pacific Ocean. The agreement includes wetlands restoration.

With Authority in LA

It took ten years, but efforts by SEIU Local 434-B paid off when the

Los Angeles County Supervisors voted to create a county home care authority to act as an official employer for 77,000 in-home health care workers. All are expected to vote to join the local next year.

Dirty Laundry Day

On October 4, hundreds of demonstrators in San Francisco and Los Angeles observed National Day of Conscience to End Sweatshops. In L.A., 800 union members and religious and community activists marched through the garment district. They delivered a "dirty laundry bill" to Guess Inc.

Welcome New Affiliates!

The California Labor Federation extends warm greetings to its six newest affiliates:

Painters Local 1798, Pasadena; Fire Fighters Local 1067, Riverside; Fire Fighters Local 3730, Carlsbad; Iron Workers Local 118, Sacramento; Chemical Workers Local 1023-C, Buena Park; and Letter Carriers Branch Local 3275, Lemoore.

November 5: Victory '98 Conference on Labor's political strategies, Riverside. Call (415) 986-3585.

November 7: Fresno Central Labor Council COPE Dinner, Fresno. Call (209) 275-1151.

November 13: Doctors Join the Labor Movement, a talk at Berkeley. Call (510) 643-6815.

November 14: Orange County Labor Council Breakfast, Community Forum will discuss Labor/Neighbor program, Santa Ana. Call (714) 966-9058.

November 14-16: AFL-CIO Organizing Institute, Latino Recruitment, Los Angeles. Call 1 (800) 690-0666.

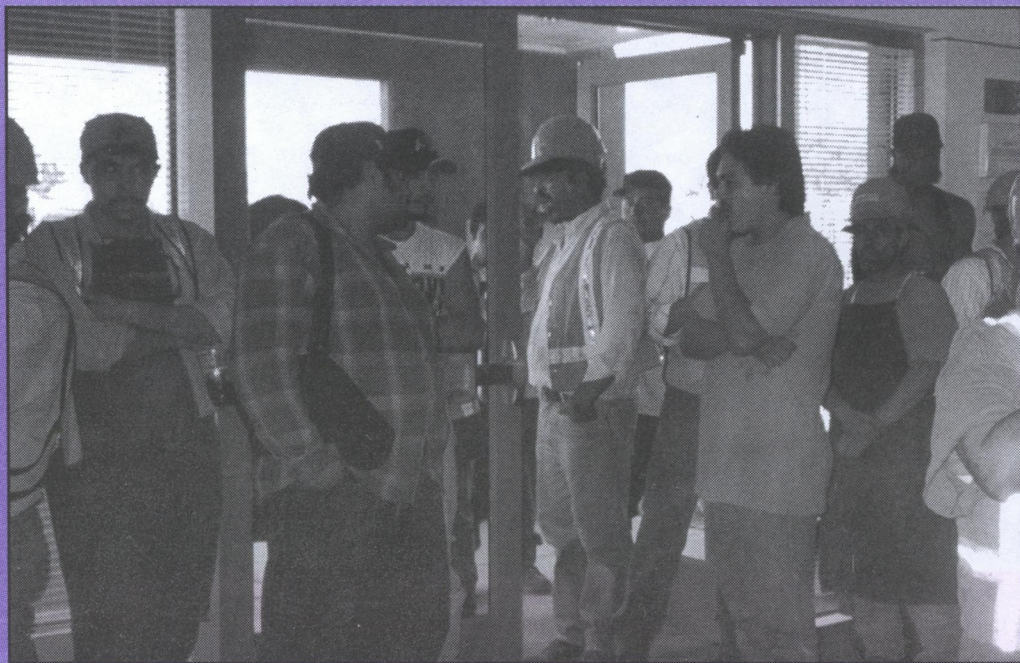
November 14-16: Western Hemisphere Workers' Conference against NAFTA and Privatization, S.F. Call (415) 681-5868.

November 19: Barbara Boxer speaks at the San Francisco Labor Council COPE Dinner, San Francisco. Call (415) 440-4809.

November 21: S. California Pipe Trades Council Golden Anniversary. Los Angeles. Call: (213) 487-4262.

November 21: Conference on Workers Compensation Issues, San Francisco. Call (415) 972-8835.

December 12: Orange County Labor Council Breakfast, Santa Ana. Call (714) 966-9058.



Nortech workers gather in the lobby of the company's main office during a "March on the Boss" day.

PLACER COUNTY UNION VICTORY Nortech Workers Organize

Workers handling dangerous household and industrial waste withstood threats, harassment and firings to win union representation recently at Placer County's largest recycling facility.

In a display of bottom-up organizing, some ninety-seven mostly Latino production and maintenance workers at Nortech

Materials Recovery Facility sought help from Operating Engineers Local 3 because of deteriorating working conditions, poor pay and benefits.

The recycling center plays an important role in reducing waste streaming into landfills and helping the county meet state-mandated reduction goals. But the work exposes employees to toxic substances including ammonia, which can dam-

age lungs and eyes, and syringes, which can carry blood-borne diseases. Until now, workers' complaints to management have gone unheeded.

In the past two years Nortech had given the workers pay raises totalling just

14 cents.

Today, most employees earn about \$7.32 an hour.

Workers also wanted a pension plan. The

company's general manager said Social Security was their only retirement option.

On September 24, workers voted overwhelmingly for the union. In response, Nortech fired eleven workers, claiming they were undocumented aliens. Most had been with the company since the facility opened three years ago.

Nortech then called the Immigration and Naturaliza-

tion Service to report the undocumented workers. The company sought a rerun election with the NLRB on the grounds that many of those who voted were working illegally and thus ineligible to vote.

The union filed unfair labor practices charges with the NLRB, seeking back pay and reinstatement. They also persuaded the INS to back off by accusing the agency of violating its own policy of labor neutrality.

Eventually, almost all the fired workers were rehired. Now begins the task of gearing up for first contract negotiations.

"This was a very satisfying victory because of the type of industry and the resistance the company put up," said Bob Miller, the union's director of organizing. "What it came down to is that every worker wants to be treated with dignity, and now Nortech workers have that." ■

The company's general manager said Social Security was their only retirement plan.

*Jerry Butkiewicz,
Executive Secretary-
Treasurer, San Diego &
Imperial Counties Central
Labor Council*

San Diego's Farm Team

We are tired of having to endorse candidates by choosing the lesser of two evils. We're tired of races where we can't find anyone to endorse. Not to mention candidates who pretend to be our friends and then forget to support working people's issues once they get in office.

What we need to do is start encouraging our own members to run for school boards, small city councils and water boards. As public officials they will really understand labor issues because they are unionists themselves.

We need more people like Carl Wood, who serves on the Fire Protection District in Fallbrook, and who comes out of the Utility Workers of America. Carl gets our issues, because he's one of us.

Our labor council is developing a "farm team" of union members, leaders and family members who want to be involved with public life. We will be providing candidate trainings, campaign assistance, and access to a small contributor PAC.

We'll help these activists run for office. We'll help them identify local races where they can get started in elected life. Or we'll help them find appointments on boards and commissions.

There's lots of room for people who want to move into the political process. In San Diego County alone, there are more than 850 elected positions, and two to three times that many appointed posts.

Nationally, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney is promoting a similar strategy to encourage more union members to enter public life. He's calling for 2,000 by 2000; that's 2,000 union members in office by the next millennium.

It's time for unions to stop giving money to candidates who don't stand for our core issues in organized labor. We need to start supporting our true friends and electing our own members. ■

Guest Column