



CONVENTION
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SPECIAL

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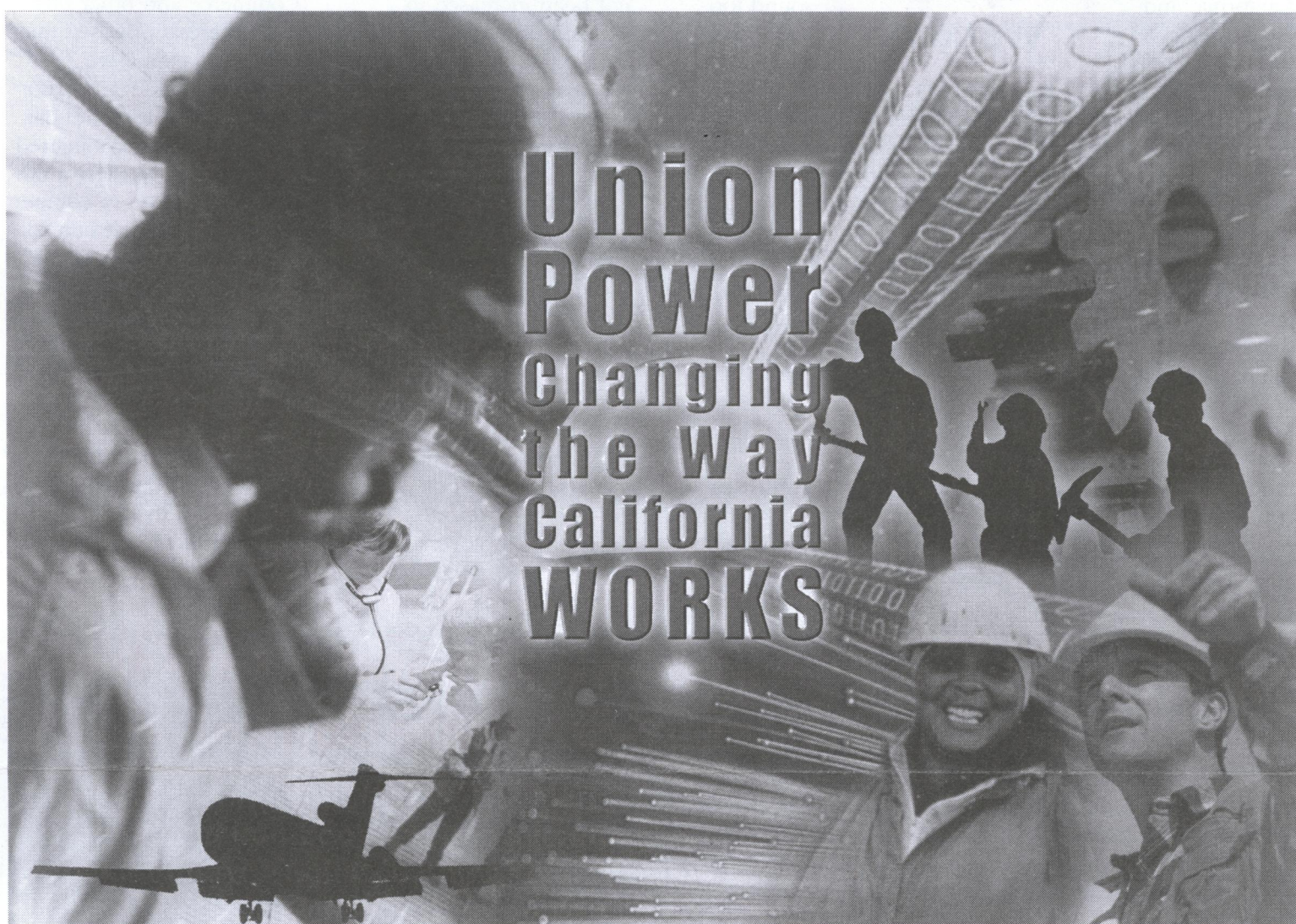
JUNE - JULY 2000

Mark Your Calendar

July 15-16. Women's Conference, California Labor Federation - State Building and Construction Trades Council, Anaheim. (415) 986-3585 x224.

July 17-19. Biennial Convention, California Labor Federation, Anaheim. (415) 986-3585 x222.

September 8-10. California Labor Federation Campaign School, Cal Poly Pomona. Information: (415) 986-3585 x231.



Convention 2000 charts new course

Delegates to the California Labor Federation Convention will endorse candidates for the November 2000 election and consider resolutions that chart a new course for the organization.

Project 2000 report

Affiliation with the Federation has grown from 500,000 to 800,000 since 1996, and may break the million-member mark in the next year. This growth creates new opportunities for the Federation to serve member unions and California workers.

To chart a new course, the Federation commissioned the Project 2000 Committee, which brought union leaders and Federation vice presidents together to examine the status of California workers and the labor movement's ability to influence public policy and economic development.

The Committee's report will be presented to the Convention as the first resolution. It calls for greater Federation action in building political and economic power for workers, and stronger support for organizing.

Speeches and workshops

Convention 2000 also features speeches by AFL-CIO president **John Sweeney** and California governor **Gray Davis**. Workshops on Monday afternoon will connect delegates with Labor 2000, the Federation's coordinated political campaign. Tuesday morning workshops will showcase best practices and new challenges in organizing, FPPC compliance, legislation, economic development, and other key topics. *For a complete list of Convention workshops, visit our website at www.calaborfed.org.*

Banquet honors leaders

Six union leaders will be honored for their contributions to California's labor movement at the Convention 2000 Banquet in Anaheim July 17. They are:

For building political power, by supporting the Federation's coordinated campaigns in 1998 and 2000, which drew union members together to communicate directly with co-workers and neighbors about key issues:

- **Don Doser**, Business Manager, Operating Engineers Local 3, Alameda
- **William Waggoner**, Business Manager, Operating Engineers Local 12, Pasadena

For building economic power, through visionary leadership that coordinated contract campaigns in Los Angeles, the Bay Area, and Sacramento, resulting in pay increases over 25% for hard-working, low-wage janitors.

- **Mike Garcia**, President, Service Employees Local 1877, Justice for Janitors, Los Angeles

For building the union movement through organizing:

On behalf of the San Francisco Airport Organizing Project, a multi-union campaign to bring a voice at work to thousands of airport workers:

- **Shelley Kessler**, Executive Secretary-Treasurer, San Mateo Labor Council

- **Walter Johnson**, Executive Secretary-Treasurer, San Francisco Labor Council

On behalf of the Los Angeles City Recreation & Park Department organizing drive, which helped 1,700 workers form a union:

- **Carol Wheeler**, District 36, American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees

Registration materials have been mailed to member unions. Banquet tickets are available by calling (415) 986-3585 x222.

Workers Compensation: California's shame

By Phil Vosburg

California is the wealthiest state in the wealthiest nation in the world. California's economy, powered by two great wealth producing regions, the entertainment industry in southern California, and Silicon Valley in the Bay Area, is strong. Many business owners, stockholders, and high-tech workers are making fortunes faster than anyone ever dreamed was possible.

Workers injured on the job seem to live in a different state. You would think that the wealthiest state in the nation would offer one of the most generous workers' compensation plans. Well, think again. Among the fifty states, California's benefits rank second to the bottom, in forty-ninth place.

Tax free but capped

Consider the benefits a worker who has been injured on the job and is unable to work would receive. That worker would get two-thirds of their pay, tax free. Now that doesn't sound too bad, however, the amount that worker

can get is capped at \$490 per week. This means no matter how much that worker was earning prior to their injury, workers compensation will not pay more than \$490 per week. The cap has not been raised since 1993. For many workers, living in some of California's notoriously high cost-of-living areas, this limit is a disaster.

Permanent disabilities

If a worker is unfortunate enough to be permanently

disabled on the job, things are even worse. For example, if a worker suffers the complete loss of a thumb on his controlling arm (the right arm if he is right handed), the payment offered would be less than \$9,000. This is a one-time only payment. In California, the amount a worker is paid for various permanent disabilities has not been increased in almost twenty years.

No cost of living increase

In 1999, the California legislature passed legislation which would update the workers' compensation program. The limit on the amount an injured worker could receive would have increased to approximately \$651 per week. The payment for permanent disabilities would have also increased.

Without a benefit increase, the cost of workers' compensation to California employers is projected to actually decrease

from an estimated 1.84% of payroll to an estimated 1.73% of payroll in 2005. Proposed increases would not have made California's program one of the more generous, indeed, they would not even have brought our benefits up to the national average. Still, the California Chamber of Commerce and other business interests opposed this bill as too expensive.

Unfortunately Governor Gray Davis vetoed the bill, denying California's injured and disabled workers a fair and decent level of compensation. It wouldn't hurt to write your member of the state assembly, and your state senator, asking them to sponsor and support legislation to increase workers compensation benefits this session. You can find your state legislators addresses in the front of your telephone book, or on the California Labor Federation's website,

<http://www.calaborfed.org/legislative.html>.

Disability for postal employees

It is true that, as postal employees, we are not covered by California's workers compensation program, but instead are covered by a federal program. So we are not directly affected by this legislation. However, almost all of us have spouses, children, parents, friends or other family members who are covered by California's workers compensation program and thus are at risk should they be injured on the job. So this substandard program truly is our concern.

Vosburg is a shop steward in the National Association of Letter Carriers. This article is reprinted with permission from the NALC Branch 214 Voice.

Minimum Wage Board appointed, to consider increase

Three million low-wage workers would benefit from an increase in California's shameful \$5.75 minimum wage, if the state's Industrial Welfare Commission takes positive action. The Commission has appointed a wage board to investigate the minimum wage and determine the level of an increase.

Union members and community allies have volunteered their time to represent workers on the board. **Max Carbucia**, AFSCME; **Tho Do**, HERE; **Rosalinda Garcia**, SEIU; **Rosalinda Guillen**, UFW; **Ron Lind**, UFCW; **Cristina Vazquez**, UNITE; and **Janet Wright**, Machinists were nominated to the board. **James Duvall**, SEIU and **Roy Hong**, Korean Immigrant Workers Association will serve as alternates. The Chamber persuaded IWC chair Bill Dombrowski to extend the deadline for nominations to the board and allow seven corporate lobbyists to join.

Minimum Wage Board Meeting July 21, 10 am July 21, State Capitol Room 112

The minimum wage board will meet for the first time on July 21 at 10am in State Capitol Room 112, Sacramento. Union members are urged to attend and monitor the Commission's actions carefully.

Health and safety trainings graduate 36 rank and file activists

Thirty-six union activists trained on ergonomics and worksite problem solving in March and April.

Harold Evans, an apprentice coordinator for Iron Workers 377 who attended the March Training-of-Trainers (TOT) says, "I want to thank the California Labor Federation and the labor movement in general not only for generating this training of trainers program but also for looking out for the well being of working people. The feedback and input from apprentices I've trained is positive, constructive and is generating lots of thoughts and ideas about how we can work better ergonomically."

After completing the April TOT, Mary Karchem of UWUA Local 132 commented, "Train-the-trainer was great preparation for the active, aggressive role our union needs to take in workplace safety."

The March workshop of twelve building trades representatives and apprentice program coordinators was the first training specifically prepared for building trades

workers by the Federation.

The April workshop of 24 activists and staff from a variety of unions was the sixth and final training-of-trainers program under the Federation's Ergonomics Training Project funded by OSHA. This program has been operating for the past three years and wraps up at the end of September. It trained 117 trainers and over 1230 workers.

We have plans for more training programs in the future! On September 23, we will hold a Union Activists Conference on Workplace Safety and Health in Los Angeles. The Federation is also applying for OSHA grant funds to begin a program for training stewards and safety committee representatives.

For more information on the Ergonomics Training Project or on our future training plans, contact Laura Boatman at 916-444-3676, x18.

—Maggie Robbins

Congratulations to Training-of-Trainers Graduates

AFGE 1399: Marvin Lennett, Russel Young
AFSCME 1587: Pierangeli

DiStella, Maureen Wheatley

AFSCME 177: Neal E. Albrechtsen
AFSCME 575: Fernando Becerra, Jr
APWU 197: Bill Tagart
APWU: Michael Foley, Irving Hacker, Vickie Mitchell
IBEW 332: Don Dixon, Jack Kennedy
Glaziers 718: Bonnie Henriquez
GMP 192: Marcy Guillen, Frank Pina
IATSE 80: Kent H. Jorgensen
IBEW 569: Joe Martin
ICWUC 995: Jesus Barragan
ILWU 34: James M. Eldridge, Bob Gradek
Ironworkers 377: Harold Evans
Laborers 1130: Bill Bowker
Laborers 300: Richard Quevedo
Laborers 304: Carlos Moreno
NALC 183: Mark Cook
NALC 214: Catalina Simonson
NALC 70: Ann M. Moore
OP&CMIA 300: Lucille Palmer-Byrd
Painters & Tapers 4: Peter N. Germentis
Resilient Flooring & Decorative Covering: John Inouye
Sign & Display (Painters) 510: Laurie Hampton
Teamsters 542: Norma Desautels
UA 342: Jamie Bird
UWUA 132: Patricia Diaz, Barbara Gonzales, Mary Karchem

CALIFORNIA LABOR NEWS

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Argenbright Security employees Rupert Garcia and Onolata Meredith join San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown in announcing the successful drive to organize Argenbright employees at San Francisco International Airport into SEIU Local 790 and Teamsters Local 665. Photo by James B. Goodno.

SFO workers use largest card-check agreement to win a voice at work

Four hundred workers have won their historic effort to join a union at San Francisco International Airport on June 27. The victory is the first under the airport's new union recognition rule, the largest card-check neutrality agreement.

"This is a great day. I am proud that my co-workers and I will now have a way to give voice to our concerns, and to make improvements that we need," said **Ruperto Garcia**, a bag handler. "I think having a union is an important step forward not only for my family, but for the entire community."



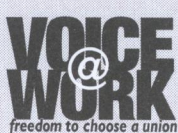
Workers and family members affected by safety conditions at the NASSCO shipyard are joining a multi-union campaign to speak with one voice, and win better contracts.

NASSCO campaign: One Voice, Una Voz

"We've got to get together and get a contract. We've got to have one voice," said Ironworker **Ken Johnson**. He spoke at an open, multi-union meeting on workers' issues uniting members of the Carpenters, Electricians, Ironworkers, Operating Engineers, Painters, and Teamsters unions working at the San Diego NASSCO shipyard. Fifteen hundred workers are fighting for better pay, pensions and medical coverage, as well as improved working conditions and on-the-job safety. Una Voz campaign stewards from participating unions are surveying members to develop solutions and stronger safeguards.

Add Basic Vegetable to your boycott list

As Teamsters Local 890 members prepare to celebrate the one-year anniversary of their strike against Basic Vegetable, the AFL-CIO has placed the company on the national boycott list. A major producer of dehydrated vegetable products, Basic demanded wage cuts and a reduction in work rules, forcing the King City workers to strike on July 7, 1999. Consumers are urged to avoid these brands: Snow White, Mello, Dial-A-Heat, Sunspiced, Potato Pearls, Classic Casserole, Santiago, and Quick-Start Chili Mix. Institutional users, including cities and counties, are joining the list of boycott supporters.



Organizers' report

Rec & Park workers slam dunk with AFSCME

Mail ballots were counted June 5, and more than 1,700 Los Angeles Recreation & Park Department workers are new members of AFSCME District Council 36. The last large group of unrepresented city employees began organizing with AFSCME nearly one year ago, and filed their petition for recognition with 70% support. The workers organize sports programs youth, recreational activities for seniors, and provide day care.

Students support food service workers

"I guess this is the power of the people," said Pomona College student **Mike Flynn**, as students wept and danced for joy after the school called on its food service contractor to recognize workers' right to organize. A two-day student occupation of the administration building spurred management to accept a settlement requiring Aramark Corp. to respect workers' choice. Students from the five Claremont Colleges campaigned in support of 53 workers for the past two years. The agreement follows a similar pact at Pitzer College.

They call it the softer side

A million square feet of the new Roseville Galleria mall will be built union, including the anchor Sears store. Sears builders joined the Carpenters and Drywall-Lathers Local 9109 this April following a six-week drive in the Sacramento suburb. The Utah-based contractor signed the master agreement after a campaign organizers describe as including both top-down and bottom-up

techniques. Organizers handbilled the construction site and other Sears stores, demanding that the subcontractor sign on.

They also worked closely with workers on the job. Organizer **Tom Brodsky** writes, "Why did some workers not want to join the union? I heard a lot of different reasons. The number one reason was a fear of losing the job they had...They had been in a non-union environment, listening to the employers...They were afraid of change and the unknown. But some did listen, and then many were interested."

A majority of workers petitioned for the election, and began organizing safety inspections. Support from other trades members on the site helped stage rallies of 200 workers, bringing the employer to the table.

—Northern California Carpenter

On track for Teamsters 986

Eighty train engineers at Metrolink in Los Angeles put their train on the Teamsters' track, forming a union despite management's best multilingual anti-union efforts. Bombardier Transportation, the subcontractor, showed anti-union videos and held captive audience meetings in Russian, Spanish and English. However, workers translated their unpaid sick days, substandard wages, and lack of benefits into "Union, Yes!" and voted for Teamsters Local 986, 60-20.

Union label traffic chopper

The next time you're stuck on the 405, you may be listening to traffic reports by union reporters and producers. Seventy-six broadcast professionals at ClearChannel's AirWatch and Westwood One affiliate, Metro Networks, joined AFTRA in Los Angeles in May.

—Los Angeles County Federation

From the labor newswire

LA prepares for Demo Convention

Hotel and Restaurant Employees Local 11 members at the new Staples Center in Los Angeles ratified their contract with Ogden Entertainment in May, months ahead of the Democratic National Convention expected to draw 35,000 delegates, journalists and protesters this August.

"For the first time, part-time workers-people who work 60 hours a month-will get health insurance," said Local 11 president **Maria Elena Durazo**. "This means people will be able to get quality health care and not have to wait for emergencies. It also shows this city can create good union jobs for what traditionally are low-wage and disenfranchised workers."

Nearly 500 workers at the arena won increased wages, improvements in seniority and scheduling,

and transfer rights from their former facility, the Forum.

Guild members win \$2 mil severance

In a victory organizers called "sweeping and wondrous," the Newspaper Guild won \$2 million in severance pay for former *Monterey Herald* employees displaced by Knight Ridder's takeover in 1997.

An arbitrator ruled that the employers violated the contract when Knight Ridder contracted with Scripps to fire all Herald employees, then refused to pay severance. The Guild's contract with Scripps called for one week of severance pay for every six months of service, with a maximum of 44 weeks' pay. Knight Ridder has already paid severance to 30 former *Herald* employees who were not rehired after the takeover. The maximum individual payment under

the severance award will be \$35,552, plus interest, from August 1997 until Knight Ridder pays the award.

Gore, Bush sign on for commercials

More than 1,200 television commercial producers have signed interim union agreements with the Screen Actors Guild and American Federation of Radio and Television Artists, including the presidential campaigns of Al Gore and George Bush. The agreements offer the wages and benefits unions are seeking and permit actors some work to continue during the strike. Mass rallies in Los Angeles and San Francisco, as well as New York and Chicago, are keeping the strike alive.

"Isn't it interesting that those tiny firms can afford to pay performers a fair wage, but huge multimillion dollar international advertisers can't or won't," said AFTRA president **Shelby Scott**.

Thousands in San Jose, Salinas, Fresno become twenty thousand in Los Angeles

Labor turns out for amnesty hearings

More than 20,000 California workers filled the Los Angeles Sports Arena early in June, rallying in the street in a spontaneous march when fire marshals closed the doors to the overflow crowd. It wasn't a celebration of the Laker's NBA championship, or practice for the Democratic National Convention. It was the labor movement, religious and community allies, and thousands of immigrant workers demanding a new amnesty for undocumented workers.

Earlier California hearings set the stage for larger turnout and inspired the Los Angeles crowd. In San Jose on April 29, more than 800 workers came to hear testimony before a panel of labor and religious leaders. In Salinas on June 3, 1,200 members of the United Farm Workers, Teamsters, local unions and Citizenship Project filled every seat in the high school auditorium.

In Fresno on June 6, 2,000 workers and family members crowded the Fairgrounds to demand amnesty and recognition for their contributions to California's economy. Federation executive secretary-treasurer Art Pulaski chaired the first three California hearings and presented the report to the Los Angeles hearing.

Labor journalist David Bacon reported on the Los Angeles hearing. For the complete article, visit the Federation's website at www.calaborfed.org.

by David Bacon

LOS ANGELES—As the hearings moved across the U.S. from New York to Atlanta, Chicago, Portland, Silicon Valley, Salinas and Fresno, the crowds turning out to back the demand swelled. Amnesty has immense support among immigrants, a fact impossible to ignore on June 10 in Los Angeles when over 16,000 people poured into the LA Sports Arena, chanting "Que queremos? Amnistia, sin condiciones! What do we want? Unconditional amnesty!" Thousands more gathered outside, unable to get in the door.

The last immigration amnesty was contained in the Immigration Reform and Control Act, passed in 1986. It allowed about three million people to gain legal status. But those who've arrived without documents after 1982 have been trapped in the same illegal status the law sought to repair.

The Urban Institute estimates there were as many as five million undocumented people in the U.S. just before that amnesty. Afterwards, it dropped to between two and three million. Today, most estimates place the number around six million, but no one really knows. Fear of deportation makes undocumented people hesitant to be counted.

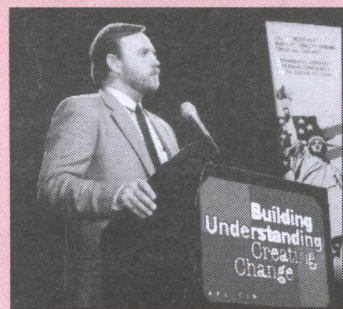
Neither sending the National Guard to patrol the high metal fence in Tijuana, nor beefed-up raids in immigrant communities, have been

able to halt this flow of people. Nor has anti-immigrant legislation, from California's Proposition 187 to the immigration reform acts passed in 1986 and 1996.

When the AFL-CIO changed its

that's on the side of immigrants, rather than one bent on trying to stop immigration, as we had in 1986." At that time, the AFL-CIO argued against immigration amnesty, and for employer sanctions, that

Inside the arena, workers recounted similar experiences to a panel of union leaders. **Maria Sanchez** described the way managers at the Palm Canyon Hotel in Palm Springs fired workers after



The UN High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that over 80 million people today live outside their countries of origin, with the U.S. home to only a small percentage. Because of growing economic inequality on a global scale, people increasingly leave and seek survival elsewhere when they cannot feed their families at home.

Photos by David Bacon and Jocelyn Sherman.

position on immigration this February, it recognized that continued immigration reflects a new world reality. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that over 80 million people today live outside their countries of origin, with the U.S. home to only a small percentage. Because of growing economic inequality on a global scale, people increasingly leave and seek survival elsewhere when they cannot feed their families at home.

The AFL-CIO's reversal in position has shifted the political climate around immigration in Washington DC dramatically. Suddenly a handful of immigration bills have been introduced, ostensibly intended to legalize at least some people. Just a year ago, even discussion of limited amnesty was considered laughable among beltway lobbyists.

"It's really obvious that the change by the labor movement has made a whole new discussion possible," says **Victor Narro**, a staff attorney at the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights in Los Angeles. "Now we have a labor movement

section of the law which makes it illegal for undocumented immigrants to work.

When the AFL-CIO announced at its October convention in Los Angeles that the old attitude needed to be changed, it set up a hearing process to advise immigrant workers of their rights, to gather testimony about how immigration law has undermined those rights, and to forge a new labor/community/religious coalition to change the law. In addition to unions, the LA hearing was sponsored by ten churches and community organizations, from the Hermandad Mexicana Nacional to the Catholic Archdiocese.

"We really need amnesty," said **Mateo Cruz**, a day laborer who marched into the sports arena with 2000 other workers from LA's street corners, mobilized by the Union of Day Laborers. "People hire us and don't pay us. Three years ago I worked for 40 days cleaning restaurants for a contractor, and when I finally told him I couldn't go on being put off about my wages, he called the police and threatened to have me deported."

they joined the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union. When forced to rehire them, the hotel suddenly decided to check their immigration status and refused to put them back to work. The workers, both documented and undocumented, responded by staying off the job until everyone was rehired. "I lost my house and my car. I sold some of my possessions so I could survive," Sanchez declared. "But we woke up. We gained self-confidence. I know that I have value and that I have rights!"

Ofelia Parra, a worker in Washington state's apple-packing sheds, described the mass termination of 700 undocumented workers in the midst of a Teamsters Union organizing drive, at the demand of the Immigration and Naturalization Service. The drive was broken. "We've had to accept jobs at lower wages. I earned \$7.51 an hour at the packing plant, and now I earn minimum wage," she said. "We contribute to this society just like the people who have papers. We need an amnesty so we can work in peace and organize to improve conditions."