

Issue #3~ May 2007

Labor Line is designed to help funders stay current with new developments in the labor movement, and new partnerships between unions and community organizations. It is prepared monthly by the American Rights at Work Education Fund, a grantee of several members of NFG's Working Group on Community and Labor Partnerships.

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH TO WAL-MART: YOU VIOLATE US WORKERS' RIGHTS

On May 1, Human Rights Watch launched a 210-page report, *Discounting Rights: Wal-Mart's Violation of US Workers' Right to Freedom of Association*. It documents in unprecedented detail how Wal-Mart's exploitation of weak US labor laws thwarts union formation and violates the rights of its US workers and is available on the HRW website along with segments of an anti-union Wal-Mart training video and photos of former Wal-Mart workers with their audio accounts of first-hand experiences with the company's aggressive strategy to defeat worker organizing. HRW also received recognition by American Rights at Work for their efforts on behalf of US workers at ARAW's April annual event.

<http://www.hrw.org>

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/04/30/AR2007043001679.html>

<http://news.moneycentral.msn.com/provider/providerarticle.aspx?Feed=FT&Date=20070430&ID=6820010>

CUT POVERTY RATES: IT CAN BE DONE

The Center for American Progress issued "From Poverty to Prosperity: A National Strategy to Cut Poverty in Half." The report, according to an article in the *Washington Post*, is the result of the work of an expert task force over the past year. The task force was guided by new research finding that the annual cost to the United States of children growing up in persistent poverty is half a trillion dollars along with the recognition that one quarter of U.S. jobs do not pay enough to support a family of four at the poverty line, and the number of families struggling to make ends meet far exceeds the number officially in poverty. Among the recommendations was passage of the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) to enable workers to join a union and raise living standards.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/04/25/AR2007042502442.html>

The entire report can be accessed here:

http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2007/04/poverty_report.html

FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE: BREAKING NEW GROUND

Small businesses may soon be paying their employees while on leave according to *Business Week* magazine. A bill introduced in Congress in March, and a second expected later this spring, as well as proposed laws in four states aim to expand the 14-year-old Family and Medical Leave Act... At the same time, the Labor Department, prodded by business groups including the Chamber of Commerce, the National Retail Federation, and the National Association of Manufacturers, has collected comments on the law in what it says is an attempt to clarify it, but in fact, it's part of a campaign to kill the bill.

http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/07_17/b4031431.html

JUSTICE FOR HOMECARE WORKERS? THE SUPREME COURT DECIDES

Evelyn Coke, a 73-year-old home-care aide from Corona, Queens, had her day in court on April 16—the U.S. Supreme Court. Coke is the sole plaintiff whose case could decide on behalf of 1.4 million home-care aides who are presently exempt from federal minimum wage and overtime protections. The union, SEIU, which represents home care workers, is supporting her legal work. According to the *New York Times*: “Ms. Coke filed her lawsuit because she was angry that she sometimes worked 70 hours a week — washing, bathing and cooking in elderly clients’ homes — without, she said, ever receiving time-and-a-half pay for overtime...”

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/17/nyregion/17homecare.html?ex=1177732800&en=1b590eda86a1ac31&ei=5070>

TREATING YOUR WORKERS FAIRLY IS GOOD, HEALTHY BUSINESS

Kaiser Permanente won a "coveted spot" on a national list recognizing employers committed to recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce, as reported by the *San Francisco Business Journal*. The giant Oakland-based health-care system ranked 27th overall on Diversity Inc's 2007 Top 50 Companies for Diversity list, which Kaiser identified as the largest competition of its kind nationally. This is the second time Kaiser's made the list, the health-care system's officials said April 4. On April 18, American Rights at Work at a Washington, D.C. ceremony, also recognized them for their pro-worker business practices. Read about it here:

<http://www.americanrightsatwork.org>

<http://www.washington.bizjournals.com/sanfrancisco/stories/2007/04/02/daily32.html>

IMMOKALEE FARMWORKERS BRING DOWN THE GOLDEN ARCHES

Farmworkers won an historic victory when they were able to secure workers’ rights on behalf of farmworkers working in the McDonald’s company supply chain.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kerry-kennedy/immokalee-farmworkers-bri_b_46105.html

WORKERS’ RIGHTS GO GLOBAL

“The business press has barely noticed and the usual champions of globalization have been mute, writes Harold Meyerson in a recent *Washington Post* column, “but an announcement last week in Ottawa signaled a radical new direction for the globalized economy. The United Steelworkers -- that venerable, Depression-era creation of John L. Lewis and New Deal labor policy -- entered into merger negotiations with two of

Britain's largest unions (which are merging with each other next month) to create not only the first transatlantic but the first genuinely multinational trade union.”

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/04/25/AR2007042502409_pf.html

In another unusual move, United States Steel, Alcoa, Goodyear and other manufacturing companies have formed an alliance with the United Steelworkers to promote and keep manufacturing in the US. The group—the Alliance for American Manufacturing—will address responses to how American factory owners and workers have been hurt by an international race to the bottom. According to the *New York Times*, the US lost 1/6 of its factory jobs over the last six years.

http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/26/business/26alliance.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

WORKERS' SAFETY IS SIDELINED BY OSHA

According to the *New York Times*, “Since George W. Bush became president, OSHA has issued the fewest significant standards in its history, public health experts say. It has imposed only one major safety rule. The only significant health standard it issued was ordered by a federal court.” Many of those who are supposed to be regulating have ties to the very companies under investigation, including the head of the federal agency.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/25/washington/25osha.html>

PRIDE AT WORK

John Sweeney, the president of the AFL-CIO, made a strong show of support for new legislation that would bar discrimination in the workplace on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. For more information, check out the Pride at Work website. The purpose of Pride At Work is to mobilize mutual support between organized labor and the LGBT Community around organizing for social and economic justice.

<http://www.prideatwork.org/>

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT: THE PARTNERSHIP FOR WORKING FAMILIES

200 of the country's leading experts on building labor/community coalitions gathered in Atlanta in February for the 2nd annual convening of the Partnership for Working Families (PWF). Through training and technical assistance, the Partnership is building a nationwide movement to transform the local economic development process. The goal is to create a development process that benefits low-income households and communities, preserves and enhances the environment, creates quality jobs (including the right to organize), and increases the supply of affordable housing, as well as providing the public a greater voice in economic development and land use planning.

The Partnership was founded by the Center on Policy Initiatives in San Diego, the East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy (EBASE) in San Francisco, the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE) and Working Partnerships USA in San Jose. Its network has since expanded to encompass 17 groups in seven states, and is still growing.

PWF receives support from an array of funders, including the Ford, Hill-Snowden, Nathan Cummings, Panta Rhea, Rosenberg, and Surdna Foundations, among others.

The Atlanta convening brought together groups from around the country to learn from each other through a series of workshops, peer-to-peer sessions, and industry work team meetings. Those in attendance began to build a collective vision of how to create a new social movement for working families and create a blueprint for the future of Partnership programs.

Victor Quintana, Senior Program Officer at the Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock, was one of those in attendance at the convening. He was impressed with the energy, talent and diversity of the Partnership network, and noted the way that its new projects are getting off to a faster start because they can tap into the experience and expertise of that network. Victor also felt that the peer-to-peer nature of the learning at the convening was extremely valuable, because it was grounded in directly relevant, real-life experience.

Veatch funds a number of the Partnership's member organizations. According to Victor, "We believe in the value of creating institutions that focus on producing good research and policy analysis. But in order to move an agenda, those institutions must also appreciate the importance of building the kind of power and capacity that is generated by collaborations between unions, community organizing groups and faith-based institutions, all of which have constituencies who can advance those policy objectives. The Partnership and its members reflect both parts of this equation."

For more information about the Partnership for Working Families, its member organizations, their accomplishments and their current campaigns, visit www.communitybenefits.org.