



### **Local Labor News:**

Oregon AFSCME-represented child care providers achieved a major victory on May 11<sup>th</sup> when SB 788, which grants providers collective bargaining rights under Oregon law, passed the Oregon Senate. While independent providers organized with AFSCME under an executive order from Governor Kulongoski, the union wants to make sure that future governors cannot undo the gains made by AFSCME Local 132. SB 788 will continue on to the House Workforce and Economic Development Committee where it is expected to quickly pass to the House floor. Once it passes the House, Gov. Kulongoski will sign it into law. Readers can follow future developments by checking the Oregon AFSCME website at <http://www.oregonafscme.com/>.

The NLRB on March 27<sup>th</sup> heard arguments from council for the Eugene Newspaper Guild and council for The Register Guard concerning the use of e-mail in the workplace. The dispute began

in the summer of 2000 when Suzi Prozanski, president of the ENG and a copy editor for the RG, sent two union-related e-mails to newspaper guild members and colleagues concerning union-related issues. In response to the e-mails, which were sent using work e-mail addresses, the RG instituted a policy that prohibits any personal use of workplace computers and threatened to discipline Prozanski. The Guild went to bat for Prozanski, and seven years later their council is arguing before the NLRB that union members have a right to send union-related e-mail in the workplace, just as they have the right to distribute other union materials and bulletins. The Newspaper Guild asserts that the RG's policy on the subject violates labor law, while RG council claims the newspaper has a right to control their personal property. The NLRB's general council sided with the union, stating, "E-mail clearly falls within the framework of workplace communication and should be consistent with existing law on this point." The outcome of this case could have a profound effect on workers in the US as e-mail becomes more and more ingrained in our day-to-day work processes. No date has been set for a final ruling on this case.

### **National:**

In a recent union election, security screeners at Kansas City International Airport voted to join the International Union, Security, Police, and Fire Professionals of America. Pro-union workers won the election by a nearly 2-to-1 ratio, and they became the first private security screeners to unionize through an NLRB election since 9/11. First Line Transportation Security, Inc.—a private security firm—has stated that it will not contest the election results. This union victory follows last year's decision by the NLRB stipulating that private sector employees contracted by the federal government have the legal right to organize on the job. For more details about this victory, visit the union's website at <http://www.spfpa.org/>.

On May 1<sup>st</sup>, Human Rights Watch released a 210 page report entitled: *Discounting Rights: Wal-Mart's Violation of US Workers' Right to Freedom of Association*. The report describes in detail how Wal-Mart exploits weak US labor laws to thwart all attempts by workers to join a union. Wal-Mart—the largest private U.S. employer—uses all sorts of tactics in order to create what Human Rights Watch calls a "climate of fear." According to the report, Wal-Mart also engages in many unlawful anti-union practices, such as eavesdropping, illegally firing workers, and threatening pro-union workers with the loss of benefits. The result, Human Rights Watch contends, is that "...workers are convinced that they will suffer dire consequences if they form a union." To read the full report online, which includes recommendations for alleviating these problems, visit <http://hrw.org/reports/2007/us0507/>.

From June 4<sup>th</sup>-June 29<sup>th</sup>, workers in the U.S. Labor Against The War will be sponsoring the "Voices of Iraqi Workers Solidarity Tour." Iraqi labor leaders Hashmeya Muhsin Hussein, President of the Electrical Utility Workers Union and the first woman to head a national union in Iraq and Faleh Abood Umara, General Secretary and founding member of the Southern Oil Company Union will tour cities throughout the U.S., speaking with workers about the situation in Iraq. According to a promotional brochure, the tour will be "a rare opportunity for people in the U.S. to dialogue directly with Iraqi workers and labor leaders about current attempts to control Iraq's oil, women's issues

under the occupation, and the role of unions in creating a non-sectarian, progressive Iraq.” To learn more about the tour or to donate money and/or frequent flyer miles to a great cause, visit the U.S. Labor Against the War website at <http://www.uslaboragainstwar.org>.

### **International:**

London—On May 7<sup>th</sup>, thousands attended a church service and rally for immigrant rights. Organized by a coalition of religious leaders and labor unions, the events highlighted the current exploitation of illegal immigrants in Britain. Cardinal Murphy O’Connor delivered the mass, and then activists made their way to Trafalgar Square, where speakers illustrated the plight of immigrant workers and called for legislation that will make the path to citizenship easier and protect the rights of immigrants. According to Cardinal O’Connor, who also addressed the rally, “Our government and the governments all over the world must treat migrant workers with justice and with dignity.” To read more about this event and follow-up campaigns, visit [www.strangersintocitizens.org.uk](http://www.strangersintocitizens.org.uk).

In Egypt, workers continue to strike, carry out work stoppages, and hold massive demonstrations in what has become the strongest wave of rank and file protest since the end of World War II. Throughout the first five months of 2007, The Egyptian newspaper al-Masri al-Yawn has recorded a new labor action each day, most of which were and continue to be unauthorized by the state-sponsored General Federation of Trade Unions. While workers are struggling for better wages and benefits and improved working conditions, they are also organizing around the issue of forming an independent trade union federation. To read an extended article on labor actions in Egypt, visit <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero050907.html>.

Italy—Taxi drivers held a one-day strike on Tuesday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, to protest government plans to deregulate the industry. 25,000 cabbies struck across the country, but the major actions took place in Rome, which was hit by widespread wildcat strikes last July. Taxi drivers marched through the capital, protesting a bill that is currently up before parliament, drawn up by Industry Minister Pierluigi Bersami. According to the taxi drivers’ unions, this deregulation bill could potentially wipe out the sector, which provides employment to over 40,000 workers. Read more about this strike at <http://libcom.org/news/italian-taxi-drivers-back-strike-09052007>.

## **Work & Labor Trivia—Know your Rights and your History!**

- Q1. What breaks must my employer legally provide during my work day?
- Q2. What type of action did the United Rubber Workers conduct at the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company in 1936?
- Q3. Do minors get the same breaks as adults?
- Q4. Who was the founder of the International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union?
- Q5. Can my employer require me to go through an “unpaid training period?”
- Q6. Who wrote “The Jungle”, which exposed safety and sanitation hazards of the Chicago meatpacking industry?
- Q7. Who was the first woman to sit on the AFL-CIO executive board?

- A1. For a six to ten hour day the employer is required to provide two paid ten minute breaks and one unpaid thirty minute break. For more than two hours, but less than six the employer must provide one paid ten minute break. For a six hour workday they must allow one ten minute break and a 30 minute unpaid meal break.
- A2. A sit-down strike.
- A3. Rules are slightly different for minors. They must receive a 30 minute meal break no longer than five hours one minute into their work shift. Also, minors should be allowed 15 minutes for their paid breaks instead of ten.
- A4. Harry Bridges
- A5. No. The employer must pay you at least minimum wage for “training time” and hours worked are subject to overtime laws.
- A6. Upton Sinclair