



A double remembrance

On a beautiful afternoon the first Sunday in May, 250 people ringed emcee Sheila Cochran and the small Bay View park, trees and inscriptions that mark the bloodiest day in Wisconsin labor history, when state militia opened fire in 1886 on marchers rallying for an eight-hour day. But more than 19th century memories were involved. The annual event was also a tribute to Frank Zeidler whose last vigorous speech was made right here in 2006. Zeidler, who died at age 93 last July, had helped create the tribute, as he had helped create so much more as Milwaukee mayor from 1948 to 1960 and as community activist and sage for all the decades afterward. Introduced by Cochran, the MCLC secretary-treasurer, historians John Gurda and Stephen Hauser remembered both Zeidler and the event's meaning to their friend. **More photos on Page 5.**

INSIDE

EFCA - Page 3
VOTE - Page 5
RESPECT - Page 9

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Thursday, May 31, 2007

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Diversity summit again pursues future leaders

On June 9, the same day the AFL-CIO is launching a dialog among labor councils around the nation to push diversity issues and leadership, the Milwaukee County Labor Council will conduct its 5th year of doing just that.

**All-Day Summit
Saturday
June 9
Laborers' Hall**

From the very start the MCLC's African American Labor and Community Summit has been about identifying leaders for the community, sharing real stories, providing hard information along with the human concerns, opening doors and identifying mentors for women and people of color. It should surprise no one that to do that well also means opening its platform to all races and back-

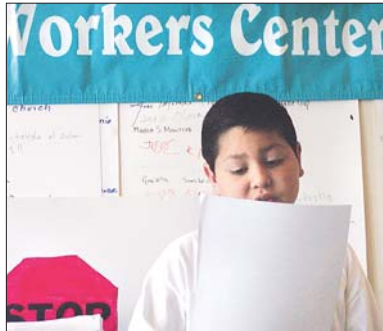
grounds, which the summit has encouraged from the start.

The name is different, but the key goals are the same this summer as the AFL-CIO acts on a convention resolution to push diversity principles and leadership roles for women and people of color through "Diversity Dialogues" by state and local federations, starting June 9 in Atlanta and radiating out to Philadelphia, Detroit and San Francisco.

The Milwaukee event, more established and broader in its embrace of a troubled community, has other unique factors. This year it is focused on the future of the regional workforce and developing a new generation of labor and community leaders.

"We know the best path out of poverty is a good union job and the best leadership for our

Summit continued Page 11



A student reads his letter to Congress at Voces de la Frontera May 11. - Labor Press photo.

RIGHT: Milwaukee youngsters set themselves and their flags dancing to the music at Veterans Park May 1. - Photo by Sue Ruggles

If we can hear the children . . .



The pull of valued families rumbles under the mass marches and halting steps in D.C. to reform immigration

By **Dominique Paul Noth**
Editor, Labor Press

Between International Workers Day (May 1) and Mother's Day (May 13), Milwaukee's successful immigration march shrewdly and

poignantly transformed "A Day Without Latinos" into "A Day Without Mothers."

Children affected by both actual deportation or the lingering threat of a government-imposed family breakup wrote from the heart and helped Voces de la Frontera, the workers rights center that organized both events, deliver more than 3,200 letters to Wisconsin's US senators, Russ Feingold and Herb Kohl, and to two of its House members, Paul Ryan and Gwen Moore.

Their letters were simple and, by Labor Press' spot check, factual. They told the stories of their daily and nightly fears, of how their parents got here -- many legal workers whose cards

were pulled by employers after years of work, when they had already married a US citizen and started a family.

They spoke openly as only children seem to do about the discrimination they saw (even not realizing until a few years later that it was discrimination), of their ongoing anxiety about a knock on the door that could wrench their families apart. In some cases the knock came -- consider the Wisconsin child of a mother fighting permanent deportation, howling every time mommy leaves the house for fear that she will be snatched away again.

The letters were delivered a week before a feeble compromise

Children continued Page 10

Candor from Iraq

White House hasn't listened to union voices, but now Milwaukeeans will

By **Dominique Paul Noth**
Editor, Labor Press

He was detained and roughed up by Saddam Hussein's regime for supporting co-workers. She still faces assassination threats from insurgents against herself and her small son.

Both are leaders of trades unions. Their militancy against all sides -- occupation forces, foreign contractors, government corruption and incompetence,

insurgents who view anyone who works as an enemy of their push toward chaos -- makes US labor leaders look like, well, puppies.

**Iraqi Union Leaders Visit:
Thursday
June 21
Yatchak Hall**

This June they will bring their courage to America as well as their belief

in their own citizenry. On a nationwide tour, including Milwaukee at 7 p.m. Thursday, June 21, in Yatchak Hall, they will speak, mingle and humanize the horrifying circumstances and unbending convictions of the



Hashmeya Muhsin Hussein

Iraqi union worker.

Two years ago, before the majority of Americans agreed that the US had botched the job and stuck our soldiers in the middle of a civil war, another group of Iraqi union leaders toured the US. They received curiosity and

Iraq continued Page 7



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State senate shoves US to adopt better worker rights

On May 16, the Wisconsin Senate, by a margin of 23-10, joined the parade of governmental units urging Congress to pass and President Bush to sign the Employee Free Choice Act.

The resolution, one of three dozen such votes by governmental bodies around the nation with 40 more speeding to conclusion, supports the rebalancing of worker rights by allowing a workplace, by a simple majority choice, to form a union.

"Local officials see firsthand the community-wide harm done by stagnant wages, skyrocketing personal debt and out-of-control health care costs," said AFL-CIO President John Sweeney in praising the Wisconsin vote.

"These elected leaders know that a union contract is the best economic uplift program for working people in our nation's history and are brave enough to tell the US Congress that it's time to take action."

EFCA, as it is known, has already sailed through the US House but faces a fight in the Senate and a presidential veto threat, which has become a standard response from the White House after it lost its rubber-stamp Congress.

The publicity barrage against EFCA, supported by the US Chamber of Commerce and other business groups, actually flies in the face of what is happening on the ground. In the past few months, many businesses are letting workers use the majority vote process (50% plus one in a workforce) to proceed to unionizing. These businesses may sometimes be moving quickly ahead of another aspect of the law, which would set a time limit and require fair dealing on both sides in reaching a first contract, which under the old law could be delayed for years. EFCA also



would impose stiff financial penalties, rather than a slap on the wrist, for misbehaviors by either side in a dispute.

The opponents of EFCA have been criticized for misleading the public and some of their own supporters as they target individual Congressmen with TV commercials.

EFCA actually allows workers to choose a supervised secret vote if they prefer and while it does prevent companies from tactics that have become routine - bullying and locked door harangues, to name two - it doesn't give unions a free hand to employ coercion. Both sides must follow rules of behavior.

The simple majority choice - also known as "card check" - will forestall companies from commonplace prolonged threats of firing, declining wages and closing plants.

Union leaders also believe EFCA will lift the organizing campaigns, when workers invite unions in to help them, out of the shadows, since once companies get wind of an organizing effort they launch blitzes to halt them.

"It makes workers feel like they're doing something dangerous as opposed to exercising a basic right," said one Milwaukee

organizer involved in one of the dozen organizing campaigns quietly underway here.

The leaders also believe it will shorten the time and hardship of organizing campaigns, and that will allow unions to focus their expenditures on actual benefits for workers and communities, rather than fighting in the courts or in protracted workplace turmoil.

It will also save companies sizeable expenditures in hiring union-busting firms, which have grown into a billion-dollar industry.

As the campaign gains ground, other reasons for passage of EFCA are being emphasized. These reasons spread the bill's importance beyond the unions who have struggled against a warped system that was unintended when

the labor laws were passed in the 1930s.

In a much distributed article, a professor and a college trustee, Peter Dreier and Kelly Candaele, have pinpointed why other constituencies should "rally behind this effort to reform the nation's labor laws":

"The reason is simple. The labor movement is still the most effective political force for electing liberal candidates at the local, state and federal levels. Once in office, pro-labor politicians are typically also the strongest advocates of strong environment laws, funding for public schools and higher education, civil rights, women's rights, gay rights, universal health insurance, affordable housing and protection of Social Security."

The wholesale attack on the living standards of US workers seems passing strange, distorted in rhetoric and attitude. While companies complain they can't find skilled workers, they block legislative action that would

encourage hundreds of thousands to see real benefits for their families in the workplace. EFCA seeks to give employees a power that should be obviously theirs - that they, not employers, have the option to form a union for collective voice.

This is a national issue. Yet it's taken not just labor unions but states and municipalities to put pressure on the federal government. The size of the Wisconsin Senate vote also re-emphasizes that this is not a GOP vs. Democrats concern. Strong figures in both parties support EFCA.

Similarly, delays continue on increasing the federal minimum wage despite strong bipartisan passage in both Houses. The bill has become something of a negotiating football with the White House.

The delay in addressing living wage has galvanized another campaign, Let Justice Roll, that is working state by state to pass legislation that will make Congress take efficient action.

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City slip-up lets Wal-Mart win 8 years later

“An oral contract isn’t worth the paper it’s printed on.” That’s one of Hollywood’s hilarious Goldwynisms. But here’s another sad truism to remember in future elections: An alderman’s finger-wagging isn’t worth the paper it’s printed on.

Back in 1999, the finger wagger, Paul Henningsen, broke a tie at the Common Council’s Zoning, Neighborhoods and Development Committee to let Wal-Mart build a 138,000 square foot store at 3355 S. 27th St., but he emphasized that he and other aldermen were “dead set” against an expansion to a supermarket, though that was allowed in the legal language.

While the aldermanic lecture comforted many residents, it is the language, not the finger, that rules.

And now eight years later, Wal-Mart plans an extensive food outlet. The Common Council believes it has to swallow the expansion, breaking years of successful citizen efforts that prevented any SuperCenter among the retailer’s city of Milwaukee outlets.

The area’s alderman, Joe Dudzik, who has said he is “no fan” of the expansion, held meet-

ings last fall in which neighbors aired complaints about how the current discount store was run. The most active union against Wal-Mart, United Food and Commercial Workers, had members there ready to do more than wag fingers, but they were unneeded.

Neighbors had a lot to say: how messy the store looked, how bad was noise and traffic congestion, how deteriorated the environment was -- and what about those shopping carts dropped all over the area? They hadn’t even got around to low wages and benefits.

A Wal-Mart worker and a few retirees concerned about pricing spoke up for the store, but they were vastly outnumbered.

When the store’s promoters brought out lovely designs of its expansion, the residents recalled similar rosy drawings back in 1999.

When Wal-Mart pointed out how much neater the grounds and aisles were today, that just brought spirited reminders that the cleanup came only after Wal-Mart decided to expand.

The citizen shout-out, however, emerges as something of a farce. The city attorney’s office

confirmed in a May 2007 chat with the Labor Press that stopping the expansion would leave the city open to a “successful lawsuit” by Wal-Mart because of what aldermen approved eight years ago.

A lot has changed since 1999, including any need for a Wal-Mart supermarket in the area -- except to pull businesses and better-paying jobs away from competitors, union and non.

Another change is a virtually new Common Council that can claim the permission didn’t happen on their watch. So, since they never took the “don’t do it, Wal-Mart” pledge, they can just hold their noses and sign.

Another change is that communities have learned a lot more about the practices of the world’s largest retailer. That’s moved opposition far beyond unions.

Convictions or ongoing court cases for discrimination, environmental pollution, traffic noise, undocumented workers, child labor violations, tax games -- all have created a broad coalition that stopped Wal-Mart in Franklin and has built opposition in many communities. In some places, Wal-Mart still held secret meetings and intense lobbying

with local officials and won despite opposition (Jefferson, Germantown). In others, merchants and local manufacturers banded with unions and environmentalists to break the iron ring of SuperCenters encircling Milwaukee.

And those centers are not doing as well as Wal-Mart envisioned. In the wake of the WakeUpWalmart.com campaigns (375,000 activists signed up), sales took a holiday dive and April 2007 brought the worst monthly same-store sales results in more than 28 years.

Now legislative anger has joined public awareness. It’s not just that Wal-Mart takes more advantage than any other company in the state of public-financed health programs (because it pays its workers too little to afford their own plan). It’s the tax loophole practices that have emerged, leading to a new bill in the Assembly that would keep Wal-Mart from shuffling among subsidiaries

millions that should be paid in corporate taxes.

The supermarket picture has also changed since 1999. Wal-Mart’s entry into a marketplace touches off lowered wage and benefits in any case, but today it’s more companies and even more types of businesses.

More than the south side Pick ‘n Saves are under attack. Even the closing of the Jewel stores didn’t lessen the competitive level, since most vibrant locations were snapped up by other chains.

Milwaukee’s grocery wars are expanding. Lena’s is popping in new stores, as is Sendik’s. A new Woodsman’s is going up in Oak Creek, and Outpost and Whole Foods are girded for Wal-Mart’s pledge to step hard into the “organic world.”

Already intense opposition has formed against Wal-Mart’s SuperCenter plans in Cudahy, not that far from its apparently unstoppable 27th St. expansion.

-- Dominique Paul Noth

Official Notices

Nominations for five state union delegates and also for a local trustee will take place June 12, followed by elections July 10, at the general membership meetings of AFSCME Local 82 at UWM. Members will receive the meeting room information in an e-mail and through union board postings prior to the meeting dates.

The delegate election is for the WSEU (Wisconsin State Employees Union), which holds a general convention July 20-22 in Madison to which AFSCME Council 24 locals sends representatives.


Berthina Joseph
Local 82 Secretary

No meetings will be held in July and August for Lodge 1668 of NIA MAW.

Wayne Fillingier
Recording Secretary

The Milwaukee Musicians Association, American Federation of Musicians Local 8, has changed its address and telephone number. The local can now be reached at AFM Local 8, 8330 N. Teutonia Ave. #204, Brown Deer, WI 53209-1550, and by phone at 414-362-9800.

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Cars that wouldn't slow for highway flaggers. Plant explosions. Cumulative effects of disease from poisonous fumes. Falls from construction heights. All of these and many more, most preventable, led to at least 125 deaths in Wisconsin in 2006. Those workers and the state's fallen military were honored as they are every year at Zeidler Union Square Park in the Workers Memorial ceremony. Waiting to speak at the gazebo podium, flanked by MCLC leader Sheila Cochran and WisCOSH's James Schultz (right), was new Milwaukee DA John Chisholm, vowing continued pursuit of criminal negligence at the workplace and continuing the fidelity of his predecessor, E. Michael McCann, to this issue. Praying in the crowd (right above) were the laborers' Nacarci Feaster, State Sen. Spencer Coggs (center, also the keynote speaker April 27) and Rep. Barbara Toles.



ABOVE: The memories of Frank Zeidler were so affectionate that humor kept breaking through May 6 at the annual honoring of the Bay View Tragedy. Folk singer Larry Penn took advantage of his inadvertent backup singers – he labeled them the “Political Doo-Wops” – and they sang “Solidarity Forever” with heart, if not always in key. From left they are State Reps. Fred Kessler and Jon Richards, Supervisor Marina Dmitrijevic, Rep. Christine Sinicki and Milwaukee Ald. Tony Zielinski. They had been caught by Penn in mid-departure after being called up from the crowd for a bow. **BELOW:** All generations were present. One young boy looked over the memorial plaques while a noted guest in the crowd was Agnes Zeidler, Frank's widow, surrounded by family and friends, beaming at the tributes from her husband's colleagues and admirers.



Setting web pace for 2008 race

Have you checked it out yet? We mean www.workingfamiliesvote08.org?

The AFL-CIO launched this interactive website to give union working families the tools they need to be more involved than ever in selecting the next president of the United States.

It is a key component of the AFL-CIO's "Working Families Vote 2008" campaign, the broadest effort yet to involve union members and their families in the AFL-CIO presidential endorsement process, aiming for record union voter turnout in 2008.

"With the Working Families Vote 2008 website, working people now have reams of information about the candidates and issues right at their fingertips," said AFL-CIO President John Sweeney in announcing the service.

The website examines presidential candidates' positions on key working family issues including the freedom to form or join unions, health care, trade policy, retirement security, good jobs and education.

It also features links to candidate videos, polls, blog roundups and other information to help prepare working families for the 2008 elections.

The site includes a forum for discussion of key issues in the presidential race. There is also an Action Center that allows users to let presidential candidates know where they stand on the issues.

The website will serve as a clearinghouse for information on AFL-CIO activities including the summer-long town hall series.

Around the country, candi-

dates for president will meet with union members and their families to discuss the issues. John Edwards and Sen. Barack Obama have already participated in such events.

The town hall series will culminate with a multi-candidate forum in August in Chicago.

Online or in person, Sweeney notes that labor engagement for this campaign is already shaping up as unparalleled. "There's absolutely no question union members and their families are going to play a central role in determining who our next President is going to be," he said.

The federation's executive board voted in March to ask each of its 54 national unions to make no endorsement until the AFL-CIO general board decides whether or not to endorse a candidate prior to the primaries.

The involvement in town hall meetings and in www.workingfamiliesvote08.org will have a strong role in that AFL-CIO decision-making process.

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How unions proved a big loser in past US foreign policy

By Ken Germanson
Special to Labor Press

Madison, Wis. -- Any doubt that labor and workers should be involved in our nation's foreign policy was dispelled at the 26th annual conference of the Wisconsin Labor History Society on April 28.

More than six dozen attendees at Union South on the University of Wisconsin campus heard how labor's sometime proud and sometimes shameful roles affected our nation's policies from World War I to the present day.

With the sons and daughters of working people still being called upon to do most of the fighting in our nation's wars, speaker after speaker emphasized that the lesson of history was for these families to bring their views into the nation's political discussions rather than merely accept what they're told.

Labor played roles that either took the US into wars or supported wars, from the little-known expedition into North Russia at the end of World War I, to the blind support of the Cold War, the involvement in Vietnam and the suppressions of Central American democracies and trade unions. In many cases these actions resulted in the weakening of United States unions, the speakers said.

Yet, as David Newby, president of the Wisconsin State AFL-CIO, noted in an afternoon panel discussion, labor's leadership in

See Page 9 for student essay winners

the current day has changed and has for years been in the forefront of urging orderly removal of our troops from Iraq.

Newby was one of the rousing speechmakers at the 2005 convention that helped bring the AFL-CIO to back the resolution of USLAW (US Labor Against the War).

David Nack of the UW-Extension School for Workers recounted how the Russian Revolution of 1917 worried many labor leaders, particularly Samuel Gompers, the founder of the American Federation of Labor and its leader until his death in 1924.

As a major supporter of President Woodrow Wilson, Gompers approved sending some 6,000 soldiers recruited mainly from Wisconsin and Michigan into North Russia in the late summer of 1918 to battle the Communists. Nack calls it a "forgotten war," in which the troops had no idea why they were spending the winter freezing in North Russia, suffering some 2,400 casualties.

But Gompers believed in suppressing the Bolsheviks lest their success cause similar uprisings among American workers. He endorse what modern historians view as an adventurous folly of choice.

Frank Emspak, director of the Workers Independent News Service (whose daily audio news



One of several panels featured (from left) David Nack, Susanna Rasmussen and Frank Emspak.

is now part of milwaukeeclabor.org), spoke of the Cold War period that began in the 1940s after World War II and of the Americans affected by the anti-Communist extremism that became rampant within the labor movement.

It is in one sense family history -- his father, Julius Emspak, was secretary-treasurer of the United Electrical Workers (UE), which became a target of the anti-Communist crusade. Everyone in Emspak's family got fired from GE in Schenectady, NY, for their progressive leadership in the union.

The purging of many of the most liberal labor organizations had multiple impacts. Emspak related - an organized destruction of the left wing of the labor movement; separating the labor movement from other progressive movements of the 1950s and 1960s, which in turn slowed progress on equal education, single payer health care and other issues, and also the ruination of trade unions in the South.

policies of President Ronald Reagan in the 1980s formed the "crucible" of the current Bush Administration coalitions, such as the connections to the religious right.

He reminded the audience that the US supported the Contras in Nicaragua and the violent death squads in El Salvador and Guatemala. Reagan enroled the religious right in moral or religious justification for these activities.

Labor's involvement in Third World economies, such as Central America in the 1980s and 1990s, helped to support imperialistic policies, argued Kim Scipes, assistant professor of sociology at Purdue University North Central, who served nine years as a member of the Graphic Communications International Union and four years as a Marine.

Scipes listed such activities as assisting the US in overthrowing democratic governments in Guatemala in 1954, in Brazil in 1964 and in Chile in 1973, as well as the 2002 coup in Venezuela.

The key point of his litany, Scipes said, was that unions supported all this without the input of their memberships and without any kind of mandate. There was no accountability, he said.

Carol Weidel of Madison recalled that USLAW grew out of a January 2003 conference in Chicago, from people deeply involved in labor who "saw the train coming down the track." Today USLAW has major union backing and community partners. It is also supporting this summer's visit by Iraqi union leaders *See opposite page.*

Darold and Gretchen Lowe were named winners of the annual Lifetime Achievement Award for their long activism within the Madison community.

Emspak cited labor's "Operation Dixie," which paid for organizers to do away with the Food and Tobacco Workers in North Carolina because they had elected a black female Communist as president, and with the Mine Mill and Smelter Workers in Birmingham, which had elected a black Communist as president for its integrated local of 17,000 members.

Operation Dixie, Emspak said, ended a progressive labor movement in the South that would have had a moderating effect upon the racism of the 1950s.

Susanna Rasmussen, a UW graduate now an outreach worker in the New York public schools, told of her grandmother, Darina Rasmussen, an office worker at UE Local 1111 (Allen-Bradley in Milwaukee) accused of being a Communist and forced to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee, where she risked being jailed for invoking the Fifth Amendment.

Darina Rasmussen was a founder of the Labor History Society. She died in 1997 at the age of 84.

Latin America pinpoints organized labor's mixed record and unawareness. Greg Grandin, professor of history at New York University, an expert on Latin American history, said that the

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Iraq

From Page 1

some understanding but they faced frequent hostility or uncertainty from audiences and the media — and even a handful of (shamefully) union members outside their Milwaukee meeting calling them “monkeys” and “terrorists.”

Times have changed but clarity is elusive. More Americans are even more confused about just who the Iraqis are but eager to understand the faces and forces at work, beyond the simplicities of jingo talk shows and political speeches.

Nor can Americans ignore that the money and blood our country has paid still pales in comparison to the blood and social disruption in Iraq, where tens of thousands have died, millions have fled the country, no neighborhood or marketplace is free from random suicide attacks and one in eight children do not survive past age 5, the worst such loss of innocence in the world.

This tour is intended to surmount the language and cultural barriers, to specify the role that Iraqi unions, ignored and dismissed by our government, can play in the shape of the future.

The visitors include the first woman to head a national union in Iraq, Hashmeya Muhsin Hussein is president of the Electrical Utility Workers Union-GFIW. While working for the Southern Company she became active in the labor movement and rose in the leadership of the Basra-based union.

She was recently elected president of the country's national electrical union. For those activities she has become the target of death threats.

Leading the tour is Faleh Abood Umara, general secretary for the Iraqi Federation of Oil Workers' Unions.

A 28 year veteran of the oil workers and a founding member of the current union, he led the workers who kept refineries going without pay in the early days of the occupation and then led strikes against occupation authorities and contractors outsourcing to foreign workers. He has been a key negotiator for the union and his fight against foreign privatization of the national petroleum treasure has led his federation to oppose the hydrocarbon law being pushed by the Bush administration.

The visitors are expected to speak candidly about the consequences of occupying forces staying or going. They will explain how the unions can both oppose the occupation and the violent insurgency, why they believe in democratic principles but criticized the long series of national elections.

“The labor movement and other civil society organizations in Iraq are that country's best hope for creating a stable, peaceful, non-sectarian future for



Faleh Abood Umara with his fellow oil workers. Photos from Iraq were taken by veteran labor journalist David Bacon.

Iraqis,” said Nancy Wohlforth, a member of the General Executive Council of the AFL-CIO who helped arrange the tour. “Yet the voices of Iraqi working people are almost never heard in the US. This tour will help break that silence.”

Indeed, the visit forces Americans to deal with some troublesome questions. The original occupation authority under Paul Bremer made decisions of horrendous consequence, most Americans now agree, including disbanding the Iraqi military and stripping all Baath Party members from government. Less noticed: It retained Saddam's laws against unionizing public workers, which affected civil service and the nationalized electrical and oil industries.

Saddam hated independent unions. It was union power and strikes back in the 1940s and 1950s that helped the Iraqi economy fund universities and hospitals and further promote people power. When Saddam gained power, he moved ruthlessly to outlaw unions, restrict them or convert them into puppets of his

own agenda.

It is no secret that the current US president shares that distaste for union power. Observers can no longer separate the consequences in Iraq today from that hostility to unions, as mystifying as it appears in retrospect.

The Bush administration bypassed the most capable secular force in Iraq, the one concerned about jobs and not religious divisions, an experienced workforce willing to defy Saddam. Stubbornly even as chaos gathered, the Bush neo-cons resisted.

Today, union workers are increasing despite the incredible odds.

It is a world of paradox. Union workers have literally stood in front of coalition tanks to keep their jobs while also being murdered by insurgent elements.

Only now has the US conceded that rampant unemployment — 60% in various regions — is a major factor in the growing resistance.

Only now, more slowly, is there realization that by emphasizing sectarian difference in elections — Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds —

the US policy inflamed those differences.

To the extremists targeting trade unionists for death, the oil workers, engineers, teachers and similar union groups “are collaborating” by simply working.

Yet simultaneously, occupation forces have arrested union leaders or tried to ignore them because they decry privatization, fight the preference for foreign workers and denounce elections that “give legitimacy to the government imposed by the occupying coalition,” as one union leader put it two years ago.

International labor groups have allied themselves with the struggles of the Iraqi unions, even while recognizing that all these unions don't agree on every issue, no more than Americans do.

The US tour has been organized by USLAW, which has moved over four years from a minority to a majority voice within the US union movement.

Other sponsors are United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ), and the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC).

The free Milwaukee visit with questions and answers starts promptly at 7 p.m. in the former assembly room, now Yatchak Hall, in the same building as the Milwaukee County Labor Council offices, 633 S. Hawley Rd. Enter the main door off the parking lot.

The Wisconsin AFL-CIO has contributed to the Milwaukee visit. Others can help with checks to the USLAW Iraq Labor Solidarity Tour, 1718 M Street, NW, #153, Washington, DC, 20036, or contact Sue Ruggles, AFT Local 212, 414-297-6276 (office), 414-688-3772 (cell), or sruggles@local212.org

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Laughter seems a great teacher as UW Chancellor David Wilson cracks up MCLC's Sheila Cochran and Teresa Thomas-Boyd (right) of Citizen Action Wisconsin.

Rapport with chancellor

As year into his role as the first chancellor to ever simultaneously lead two divisions of the University of Wisconsin, David Wilson brought some stunning academic credentials to a "get to know you" meeting with Milwaukee's labor and community leaders May 17, including master's degrees and a doctorate from Harvard.

But this crowd had an even more immediate affinity to his life story. It had echoes of a remarkable path they knew.

The 10th child of an Alabama sharecropper, who needed help in the fields, Wilson didn't attend a full week of school until the seventh grade. To compensate, and to keep the wind out, his mother plastered the walls of their rickety home with articles from Time maga-

zine, bringing the world to him before he went out into it.

Then, after earning the first college degree in the family, he proceeded to conquer the academic world with research, university administration, and a series of major positions and projects that enhanced minority opportunities and even helped create a university in Africa.

Today he has a unique mission — to guide and eventually merge the UW Colleges, with their 13 campuses, and the UW-Extension, which has presence in all 72 counties and major programs in alliance with communities, radio, TV, and other educational services.

Yet for all that, those participating in the discussion were struck by how willingly he listened and how directly he spoke

to their concerns. In fact, what started out as a "meet and greet," to see if the new chancellor was on board with goals for the working community, became a free-flowing exploration of mutual enthusiasm.

The labor and Citizen Action of Wisconsin leaders heard Wilson give solid support to a UW-Extension program of great importance to them — the School for Workers, which has played valuable roles as trainer and facilitator for state workers engaged in lifelong learning.

Wilson also indicated his eagerness to serve as a partner to UWM in fighting the rate of college level minority dropouts, discussing programs that would bring more tools and remedial support in conjunction with UWM's chancellor.

Since preparing students at the high school level was much on the group's mind, Wilson asked Eloise Gomez, director of the Milwaukee UW-Extension, to discuss programs already in place in high schools. To the surprise of many, Wilson was also eager to brainstorm ways to enhance a longtime goal of unions, to better introduce labor history programs into the state's high schools.

Back Pain?

Menomonee Falls, WI — According to a recently released back pain relief report, most back pain sufferers have no idea how to eliminate their pain. Some use heat, others ice. From sleeping on the floor, to pillows underneath the legs, back pain relief techniques vary. But thanks to a free report, local back pain sufferers finally know exactly what to do. To get a copy of the free "Back Pain Relief Report", call toll-free, 1-888-302-1889. (Toll-free, 24 hour recorded message)

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Calendar

Saturday, June 2

Annual MICAHA Banquet:
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Guest speaker: human rights activist Van Jones.
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Call (414) 264-0805 for tickets or to reserve table.
6 p.m. reception before dinner.

Midwest Airlines Center, 400 W. Wisconsin Ave.

Tuesday, June 5

Laborfest Planning Meeting
5 p.m., 633 S. Hawley Rd.

Wednesday, June 7

Delegate Meeting

Milwaukee County Labor Council AFL-CIO
6:30 p.m., Serb Hall, 5101 W. Oklahoma Ave.

Saturday, June 9

African American and Community Summit
Pathways to Growth and Leadership

Registration 8 a.m. (\$15). Breakfast, lunch, materials included. Panels on diversity and constituencies.
Special speaker Noel Beasley, international vice-president of UNITE HERE. See Page 1 story.

Laborers' Local 113 Hall, 6310 W. Appleton Ave.

Tuesday, June 19

Laborfest Planning Meeting
5 p.m., 633 S. Hawley Rd.

Monday, June 25

AFL-CIO Community Services Meeting
5 p.m., 633 S. Hawley Rd.

Thursday, June 21

Iraqi Union Leaders on US Tour

7 p.m. event, Yatchak Hall, 633 S. Hawley Rd.
See Page 1 story.

Monday, July 9

MCLC Executive Board
2 p.m., 633 S. Hawley Rd.

Tuesday, July 10

Laborfest Planning Meeting
5 p.m., 633 S. Hawley Rd.

Wednesday, July 11

Delegate Meeting

Milwaukee County Labor Council AFL-CIO
6:30 p.m., Serb Hall, 5101 W. Oklahoma Ave.

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NLRB finds new supervisor in town: Congress

America's workers have a real chance to reverse decisions by the Republican-controlled National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) that opened the door for employers to take away union protections from millions of workers in nearly every profession.

In both houses of Congress this spring, Reps. Robert Andrews (D-N.J.) and Don Young (R-Alaska) and Sen. Christopher Dodd (D-Conn.) introduced the Re-Empowerment of Skilled and Professional Employees and Construction Tradesworkers (RESPECT) Act to help workers regain their rightful place as partners in the workplace with employers.

The bill would reverse a Republican party-line vote by the NLRB in September 2006 that slashed long-time federal labor law protections of workers' freedom to form unions.

In May came personal testimony in support of the legislation including one West Coast nurse who described how she discovered that "10 minutes of pencil pushing" — using her experience to assign fellow nurses to various beds — suddenly made her a supervisor, unprotected by her union and unable to speak up about her hours, assignments and duties.

The rulings that allowed this came in three cases, now collectively known as the Oakwood cases.

(Milwaukeeans may recall skits and rallies last summer anticipating the "Kentucky River" decisions, named after a US Supreme Court decision that opened the door for the NLRB to look again at the definition of "supervisor." But it was the lead case last September involving Oakwood Healthcare Inc., that reinterpreted the definition of "supervisor" in a way that greatly expanded the number and types of workers that can be so classified, so now the NLRB issue bears the name of "Oakwood cases.")

Although two of the three cases involved only nurses, the expanded definition applies to workers in every industry and means up to 8 million workers — some labor experts actually say three times as many — including nurses, building trades workers, newspaper and television employees and others, may be reclassified as supervisors and barred from joining unions.

Under federal labor law, supervisors are not automatically free to form unions and not protected against retaliation for forming unions.

The NLRB's new definition of supervisor — which the bill would reverse — essentially enables employers to make a supervisor out of any worker who has the authority to assign or direct another and uses independ-



It was no surprise that the NLRB supervisor decision got a public slamming at a recent Fourth Street Forum from Candice Owley (second from left), head of the nurses' union and state AFL-CIO President David Newby (right), plus apparent sympathy from UWM Prof. James Peoples (left), a fairer trade advocate. What may have surprised viewers in a discussion of whether unions still matter is that even John Sheridan, a veteran executive at a "union avoidance" law firm, agreed that unions created the middle class and seemed quirkily supportive of their future.

ent judgment.

Amazingly, the board also ruled a worker can be classified as a supervisor if he or she spends as little as 10% of time overseeing the work of others. That breaks down to less than an hour a day.

In their dissent, NLRB members Wilma Liebman and Dennis Walsh said the decision "threatens to create a new class of workers under federal labor law—workers who have neither

the genuine prerogatives of management, nor the statutory rights of ordinary employees."

Liebman and Walsh wrote that most professionals and other workers could fall under the new definition of supervisor, "who by 2012 could number almost 34 million, accounting for 23.3 percent of the workforce." They went on to say the Republican majority did not follow what Congress intended in applying the National Labor Relations Act.

Plant labor history, grow cash

Student contest winners were also recognized at the Wisconsin Labor History Society meeting in Madison, including Maia Surdam of the University of Wisconsin, who won the annual Frank P. Zeidler Scholarship for a paper on migrant workers.

The society also unveiled the eight Wisconsin high school students who won cash prizes for 750-word essays around the theme "Unions Are Important to My Family and Community . . ."

First prize of \$500 went to Amber Cichy, a 10th grader at Menomonee Falls High School, who contrasted favorably her father's union job as a nurse at the Milwaukee County Mental Health Complex to her mother's non-union conditions as an occupational therapist. Her father, James, is a member of Local 5001, Wisconsin Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals, AFT.

Second prize of \$300 went to Maurice A. Sharpe, an 11th grader at Marquette University High School whose essay, "Elves and Their Union," related how his mother's story of Santa in a fictional labor dispute with his elves (always resolved in time for Christmas) gave him deeper insight into the value of unions. Mom is Marie Britt-Sharpe, UAW Brewery Workers Local 9.

Third place \$200 went to senior John Ertl at Park Falls High School, who related how his father stuck by USW Local 2-0445 as the workers retained rights through a paper-mill shutdown and reopening under new management, and how his mother went from non-union trials to a job with AFSCME Local 1941.

Five \$100 honorable mention prizes were given to: Peter Gilbert, 10th grade, Northland Pines High School, Eagle River;

Hillary Singer, 9th grade, at Whitnall High School, Greenfield; Bethany Rose Glasson, Potosi, who is being home schooled; John Backman, 12th grade, Prairie School, Racine; and Julie Evans, 12th grade, Thomas More High School, Milwaukee.

Headaches ?

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The bipartisan legislation spells out and locks in that original intention. It also could help break a procedural logjam that is denying workers the right to join a union. Currently, the NLRB is holding up dozens of cases that address the definition of supervisor, and 60 of those are union election cases.

These cases have been sent back to the various regional boards. In some of these cases, workers who voted several years ago to form a union are still waiting for their ballots to be counted.

How hot the supervisor issue is was revealed May 17 when the Minnesota Nurses Association reached a positive new three-year contract with 13 Twin Cities hospitals and six separate health systems, which all recognized the vital role of registered nurses.

But the union refused to accept 11% raises, preservation of their health plans and committees to establish even better ratios of nurses to patients — until the hospitals agreed not to requalify nurses as supervisors under the new federal labor laws.

Nurses saw these as "unacceptable concessions presented by the employer," said Linda Slattengren, president of the union that represents 10,750 registered nurses.

The RESPECT bill is independent from but does dovetail nicely with the intense effort in Congress to pass the Employee Free Choice Act. *See Page 3.*

Articles by James Parks contributed to this story. He is one of the regular writers for the AFL-CIO blog, which you can get by email delivery at blog.aflcio.org.

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Children

From Page 1

immigration reform bill was announced in D.C., one that foresees more of the same in the future since it diminishes the importance of family ties and elevates advanced skills - catering to technical education - or workers willing to do "the jobs Americans won't." Which is a lie. Americans won't do those jobs under the wages and treatment that immigrants are willing to endure.

While the concessions from the Republicans in the bill are a mild breakthrough, and some Democrats clearly meant well in their own concessions, the AFL-CIO immediately pointed out that the compromise expanded policies that "frequently amount to virtual servitude, where workers' fates are tied to their employers and their workplace rights are impossible to exercise."

Warned AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, "The proposal includes a massive guest worker program that would import hundreds of thousands temporary workers every year to perform permanent jobs throughout the economy."

Almost simultaneously, laid-off American workers with advanced degrees complained that the effort to virtually double guest-workers in software and other IT technologies was a way of bypassing American workers by bringing in newcomers in some cases at half the cost.

The compromise was accompanied by the doomsday rhetoric that surrounds so many GOP "concessions," from Iraq to New Orleans funding. Sen.

Lindsay Graham called the bill "the last best hope" for immigration reform and warned that not accepting a \$5,000 per person, eight-plus years route to legal status for undocumented immigrants -- at least some of them; others would be permanently temporary -- would end any hope of negotiation.

While the compromise represents a chip at the logjam, immigration policy analysts immediately noted two things. The bill would not allow a path to legalization to proceed until border security and verification processes were completed, and verification depends on coordinating five separate identity databases that have not yet been comprehensively built or connected. It is worth noting that so far none of the federal databases, from the FBI system to airport security, has been completed on time.

The children's letters emphasize that the problem is immediate. Several will have grown up, here or in countries of entrenched disease and poverty, before any practical reform exists.

Their parents, facing separation from their families, are unlikely to emerge from the shadows, a core requirement in solving the presence of some 10 to 12 million undocumented persons.

Immigration rights groups say they are open to some limitations on the family emphasis as long as it doesn't disjoin parents and children, adults or minors.

The pace of the current compromise is useless to the children, as the letters reveal. It means that over the next decade some will go to school and come back to an empty house, forced



The realities of immigration for the young were shared by letter and voice May 10 at Voces de la Frontera.

to rely on neighbors or government programs to keep them clothed and cared for.

Some will continue to find themselves separated not just from parents but siblings, since one was born in this country and the other was carried into this country on the back of their mother.

The initial efforts here for "A Day Without Mothers" were hastily arranged to precede D.C. action and did not receive much media attention, but Voces leader Christine Neumann-Ortiz vowed that the letters and the children's voices would grow at future events planned by the center.

Voces comes to the campaign with enhanced credibility. While this year's "Day Without Latinos" marches around the country had lost some of the novelty of last year, and may have been slightly chilled by subsequent raids on companies hiring Latinos, this was not the case in Milwaukee.

The conservative count placed the Downtown march at 80,000 participants.

More than a hundred companies agreed in advance to let their workers participate, and some that didn't still held off on penalties against the participants, which included Asian and European immigration groups, labor unions, the NAACP and other community groups.

At the April delegate meeting of the MCLC, Secretary-Treasurer Sheila D. Cochran observed that this massive action in the middle of a workday "was nothing less than a strike."

"If we could turn out these sort of numbers for one of our causes," added MCLC President Willie D. Ellis, "imagine the difference we know we would

make." Politicians - assuming the majority of marchers were illegal and therefore couldn't vote for or against them - are likely miscalculating. An anecdotal survey revealed that most were US citizens with the power of the ballot behind them.

There are splits even in the immigration community about the best legislative way to proceed, with some arguing that gain is a step in the right direction and a rebuff to those who regard any legal path as "amnesty."

The AFL-CIO has taken a firm position and says its commitment to workers requires opposing any legislation that "excludes millions of workers and thus ensures that America will have two classes of workers, only one of which can exercise workplace rights."

"As long as this two-tiered system exists," said Sweeney in response to the proposed compromise, "all workers will suffer because employers will have available a ready pool of labor they can exploit to drive down wages, benefits, health and safety protections and other workplace standards." He vowed that labor would press Democrats to incorporate such beliefs into the legislation, to further balance the opportunity for workers against the behavior of conglomerates, many of which have shown a trans-national resistance to workers' needs.

Yet some of the biggest businesses that supported the idea of a compromise are now balking, not only at the reporting demands laid on companies but out of genuine concern that emphasizing skills over family reunification could backfire.

Republicans and wavering

Democrats do have a hard road. There is an often unthinking backlash against immigrants illegally here, which is a civil not a criminal offense.

The posture on talk radio and in some communities of making it a felony is colored in many ways, including an unfair fusion of the families that come here to work with the continuing fear of terrorists sneaking into the country.

It is an issue that the federal government must solve, but local communities are muddying the legal waters by proposing, as just happened in Green Bay, penalizing landlords who rent to undocumented workers. One wonders how the landlord will know when the government doesn't.

States like Wisconsin are also outraged at the federal Real ID bill, which seeks to turn DMV workers into immigration police but isn't willing to pay for even a bad idea.

The debate is further complicated by contradictory federal policies, and even by the tendency of immigration supporters to blame all American companies.

Some for the sake of profits do turn a blind eye, or pay foreign agents to sneak workers in. Others, particularly small businesses and farmers, thought they were duly registering their employees and relying on government databases to sort it out.

Raids, in communities such as Whitewater, have now put those owners in criminal court, perplexed about what they are guilty of.

Add in American trade policies, which subsidize the export of goods to countries like Mexico, making it impossible for small farmers to make a living. Suddenly a century-old, quietly accepted practice of workers crossing the border to and fro has been turned into a torrent, which we demonize without recognizing our own culpability.

The immigration population is actually a complicated mix of legal temporary workers, US citizens and undocumented. Some want to work a while and go home. Some want to put down roots. Both are impeded by the partisan rhetoric.

Sorting it out takes wisdom and patience, which has been in short supply in D.C. over the last six years - as has been basic competence in managing large programs.

The biggest failure is to grasp the essentials of family unity, family determination and family law. That alone may undo the current reform compromise, which requires acceptance from all sides.

In the past the diverse immigrant community has not voted as a bloc, but the failures of Congress to put family first are cementing them into united action.

King Solomon would have trouble with this, and no Solomons have emerged in D.C., though there are many would-be kings.

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Labor mottoes and members joined the enormous march through Downtown Milwaukee May 1 for immigration respect and reform. — Photo by Sue Ruggles

Summit

From Page 1

community comes from a healthy and viable labor movement," noted the summit's pioneer organizer, Sheila D. Cochran, today the chief operating officer as well as secretary-treasurer of the MCLC. But not all affected parties are currently union members or likely to be under current rules and attitudes, so Cochran sees a deeper mission:

"How do we prepare and educate new leadership to understand the core principles of trade unionism?"

These principles, she argues, bring the voices from the street into effective community and political action and put the needs of working families, and families that want good education and safe communities in order to work, as a top priority.

One way to do that well, Cochran notes, is to continue what the summit did from the start — open the podium to partners and like-minded concerned citizens.

In past years, the conference has guided casual attendees into community leadership and even into political office. It has discussed global issues that affect communities and the dilemma of the disproportionate number of incarcerated blacks returning to the community. It has directly

confronted the violence and poverty in the inner city.

This June 9, the summit is dedicated to "Pathways to Growth and Leadership" and providing deeper understanding of the constituency groups that work with the AFL-CIO to promote leadership skills and social engagement.

The conference will also invite established white city and suburban union leaders to speak their piece and share their issues.

It again has asked a national leader to motivate the crowd. This year the keynote address will bring in Noel Beasley, the international vice president for UNITE HERE.

Key presentations of opportunities and missions will be sprinkled throughout the day from the constituency groups that are affiliates or close partners with the MCLC.

These include the APRI (A. Philip Randolph Institute), LCLAA (Labor Council for Latin American Advancement), CBTU (Coalition of Black Trade Unionists), CLUW (Coalition of Labor Union Women), ARA (Alliance for Retired Americans) and AFRAM (a federation of SEIU caucuses devoted to human and civil rights and minority advancement).

The summit is an all-day conference that Saturday at Laborers' Local 113 Union Hall

at 6310 W. Appleton Ave. The \$15 registration fee covers continental breakfast, all materials and panels, and lunch.

Registration is at 8 a.m. and a continental breakfast starts at 8:30 a.m. For additional information or advance registration, contact Annie Wacker, AFL-CIO Community Services liaison, (414) 771-9830, also annieaflcio@sbcglobal.net, or Cochran and the MCLC staff, (414) 771-7070, also sheila@milwaukeeelabor.org.

Organizer's murder in Mexico stirs Congress to demand probe

He moved to Mexico from Ohio to help guest workers understand their rights and shut down a corrupt system of middlemen and contractors charging these workers, against US law, for jobs they had won with North Carolina agricultural growers.

All the circumstances indicate this was why, on April 9, Santiago Rafael Cruz was brutally beaten and murdered in his union office in Monterrey.

Fears that his murder was the escalating consequence of intimidation, threats, vandalism and robberies by the forces seeking to rob guest workers before they came to the US have now led to calls on the Mexican government to aggressively investigate.

The calls now come not just from US human rights groups but also from Congress, in a group letter by many members of the House and in an individual letter from Milwaukee Rep. Gwen Moore.

Cruz was an organizer for the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC), an AFL-CIO affiliate that represents thousands of Mexican nationals who travel to the United States each year for seasonal work. In 2005 FLOC reached a collective bargaining agreement with the US growers to enforce those rights in Mexico, where the workers were made to pay bullying middlemen for the chance to work in America.

Under US law, the employers must pay the costs of paperwork and transportation, even though "recruiters" were illegally charging workers for those expenses.

"We fear that Mr. Cruz was beaten and murdered in conjunction or potentially as a direct result of FLOC's work to bring change to an exploitative labor system," the letters from Congress state. They urge both Mexican President Felipe Calderon and Nuevo Leon Governor Jose González to launch intense investigations - and they promise that a congressional team will visit Monterrey to examine the progress.

Cruz's murder exposes the underbelly of problems with immigration rules on the Mexican as well as the US end of the operation. While most US media reports focus on the "coyotes" who illegally transport workers across the border for exorbitant fees, sometimes abandoning them in the desert, payoffs to get into the country or to get guest worker status are emerging as a major corruption in US immigration policy in many countries.

Human rights experts have been arguing for years that solution depends not just on Congress but also on global cooperation, which will be hard to get if the US policy remains confused, unfair and easily co-opted by ruthless middlemen.

-- D.P.N.

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