

## Employment Trends

### More temps

The US Department of Labor reported that temp agencies added 136,000 new jobs in February, March and April after 16 months of declines. (Source: Vancouver Sun 5/22/02)

### Smaller pensions

The Institute for Women's Policy Research reports that women over 65 are half as likely to receive pensions as men. Further, those with pensions get half as much as men. A large part of the explanation for the disparity lies in the fact that part-time workers, who are disproportionately women, are much less likely to have employer-sponsored pension plans. (Source: www.iwpr.org 5/22/02)

### Older temps

A study by the international temp agency Adecco finds that for the next 10 years people ages 50 to 70 will be the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. population eligible to be part of the work force. By 2005, people 55 and over will be nearly 20 percent of the working-age population compared to 12.5 percent in 1990. Adecco has launched its "Renaissance Program" to attract Baby Boom-age workers. (Source: Sacramento Business Journal 5/3/02)

### Older contract workers

The Los Angeles Daily News (5/20/02) reports that county government has dramatically expanded the use of retirees on a contract basis. Retirees can only be employed for a maximum of 120 days/year and are not paid benefits.

### Flexible workforce

Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to explore hiring contract workers and other "flexible option" to fill new jobs. (Source: City News Service 5/22/02)

# NEWS & comment

NAFFE

MAY 29, 2002

## Chicago Day Labor Ordinance Passes

The Chicago City Council passed an important municipal ordinance in April to regulate the day labor industry. The ordinance requires day labor agencies to obtain a special license to operate which should force increased agency compliance with existing labor and employment laws. The ordinance:

- Requires agencies to keep records on who they hire and don't hire and how much they pay each worker. In addition, workers will be entitled to copies of their work records.
- Bans companies from charging transportation fees when they provide it. If workers are referred to third party transportation, it must be provided by a publicly registered company or be free.
- Bans fees for returnable clothing or equipment.
- Makes it explicit that day laborers are covered under Chicago Human Rights Ordinance.
- Requires the posting of signs outlining the rights and obligations of day laborers in a conspicuous place in English, Spanish, and Polish.
- Establishes fines for breaking the law.

The ordinance passed after a concerted effort by day laborers and their allies including the Latino Union of Chicago, and the Day Labor Organizing Project of the Chicago Coalition of the Homeless, and Jobs with Justice.

While the bill's proponents did not get everything that they wanted, such as a complete elimination of transportation fees or a complete ban on non-tax payroll deductions, most felt that the ordinance was a big step forward. Activists plan to mobilize to ensure that the City drafts effective regulations under the ordinance before the bill takes effect on July 1, 2002.

## Spring Defensive

In the name of "global competitiveness" corporations and their political allies around the world are pushing to repeal employment laws that workers have fought for and won over the years. The result is more insecurity and more contingent jobs. But in a series of strikes this spring workers in countries around the world are demonstrating that they are not buying corporate line.

In **Italy**, 11 million workers shut the country down in a massive general strike on April 16, the first in twenty five years. Workers walked out to protest new laws that would repeal job protections and result in an increase in the number of low wage and contingent jobs. (The Nation, 6/3/02)

Also on April 16, 10 million workers in **India** employed in state run industries struck to protest the repeal of a 55 year old labor law that protected workers from arbitrary lay-offs. Workers fear that the change will undermine job security and lead to

the increased casualization of work (Reuters, Asia, 4/16/02).



In **Nigeria**, thousands of workers struck major multi-national corporations to protest policies which have led to increased contract and casual labor. Both permanent workers and casual workers participated in the strikes and protests. (Africa News Service, 5/23/02)

Thousands of public and private sector workers in **Denmark** began a series of strikes on May 16 to protest a new part-time hours law that would allow employers to cut working hours and salaries at will. Workers say the law will result in many full-time jobs becoming part-time and open the door to further casualization. The airline industry has been particularly hard hit by rolling strikes. (World Market Analysis, 5/16/02; Aviation Week, 5/17/02)

## New Threats to Immigrant Workers

Federal action on multiple fronts threatens immigrant workers. The Social Security Administration plans to utilize Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) databases before issuing social security cards. This will make it more difficult for workers to obtain social security numbers.

A new House bill (H.R. 4043), if enacted will require state departments of motor vehicles to check INS records before issuing drivers licenses. The bill supplements initiatives already being taken in various state legislatures. In Connecticut, for example, the Department of Motor Vehicles is proposing regulations that will require DMV staff to scrutinize

**The INS, the SSA, the DMV, and the DOJ threaten to form a new seamless web of repression...**

immigration documents something for which they have received little or no training in order to issue drivers licenses.

The INS itself continues its post 9/11 crackdown. This has resulted in delays in processing temporary work visas as the agency performs much more extensive criminal background checks and becomes acquainted with its new databases. The delays are causing, the Christian Science Monitor reports, "all types of businesses, from resorts to high tech industries, to stumble."

Local law enforcement may soon get the power to enforce immigration laws. Already the Justice Department has authorized 35 Florida law enforcement officers to arrest "illegal immigrants"; South Carolina is pursuing a similar agreement with the Justice Department. This is likely to exacerbate tensions between police and day laborers.

Generally, immigration restrictions tend less to restrict employment and more to increase worker exploitability. This vulnerability hurts all workers as it drives down employment standards and workers' bargaining power.

(Sources: Christian Science Monitor, 5/21/02; New York Times, 5/20/02; Hartford Courant, 5/19/02; Associated Press, 5/23/02; NELP Immigrant Employment Rights Listserve postings)

## Spring Offensive

A majority of **Cornell University** teaching and research assistants filed a petition for a union recognition election with the NLRB on May 14, 2002 (Source: Cornell Association of Student Employees/United Auto Workers press release)

**Columbia University's** Graduate Student Employees Union struck for one day at the end of April. The union is seeking to have union recognition election ballots counted. Clerical workers organized by the UAW Local 2110 came out in support of the strike and honored the picket lines. (Source: University Wire, 5/1/02)

**Tufts University** graduate employees voted in an NLRB union recognition election on April 24, 2002. As with the Columbia workers, however the university is appealing the NLRB ruling on the right of the workers to form a union and is preventing ballots from being counted. (Source: Boston Globe, 4/25/02)

The Harvard Crimson reports that "some of **Harvard University's** teaching fellows are quietly organizing" in an attempt to form a union (5/10/02)

Full-time professors in Local 3579 of the American Federation of Teachers had been working without a contract since June 30, 2001 at **Northampton Community College** in Pennsylvania. The union reached an agreement with management with less than one day to go before the union had threatened to go on strike. (Allentown Morning Call, 2/8/02)

**Michigan State University's** graduate employees went on strike at the end of April. The Graduate Employees Union and MSU however reached a tentative agreement soon thereafter. If ratified by the membership the agreement will be the union's first contract. GEU describes the contract providing for "substantially improved health care coverage," included employer contributions towards health insurance premiums for spouses, domestic partners, and dependents of graduate employees," guaranteed across-the-board percentage annual wage increases, and "strong protection from overwork." (Sources: <http://www.msu.edu/~geu>; Associated Press, 5/25/02)

**Illinois State University's** non-tenure track faction have organized an association and affiliated with the Illinois Education Association. The association is reportedly a step on the way to unionization. (Source: The Pantagraph, 4/28/02)

Resident Assistants at **U. Mass-Amherst** voted 138 to 88 in favor of joining UAW Local 2322. The university's administration however is refusing to recognize the bargaining unit. The Faculty Senate urged the administration to "enter into immediate discussions" with the union. The union has organized one action a week since the university refused to negotiate with the union in March. One action, a sit-in, led to the arrest of 35 unionists. (Massachusetts Daily Collegian, 5/10/02)

## Decline & Fall?

The past few years have not been kind to **Labor Ready**, we are happy to report. In 1996 the company's stock sold at \$24 a share. Today it sells for \$5 a share. Profits margins were a slim but sustaining 3.3% then, today they are barely 1%. Top management has had to flee under a cloud of lawsuits and charges of corruption. Enforcement agencies have hit the company with action on issues ranging from charging illegal fees to cash checks to Workers Comp fraud. Will Collette of the Building Trades (AFL-CIO) has orchestrated a model corporate campaign to expose the company's abusive practices. Two articles which appeared in April spotlight Labor Ready's plight. *Mother Jones* ran a good story by Christopher Cook in its April issue that exposes Labor Ready's abusive practices and what enforcement agencies are doing about them. And *The Economist* offered a thumbnail analysis of the company in its April 13 issue. It argues that high workers comp costs associated with manual labor combined with the low mark-ups at the bottom of the labor market make it difficult for any day labor firm to make money. "Making money at the bottom of the labor market can be tough... Labor Ready's best days may be behind it" (*Mother Jones*, 4/02; *The Economist*, 4/13/02)

## NAFFE to Send Delegate to ILO Meeting

Karin Uhrlich of Tucson's **Primavera Foundation** will be NAFFE's delegate to the annual meeting of the International Labor Organization in Geneva to be held June 3-17. The ILO is the UN-affiliated agency that sets international labor standards. Karin joins a delegation from labor and community groups in North America. This year, the ILO will focus on

contingent work issues and worker cooperatives both issues of importance to NAFFE members.

Over the past year, the ILO has been drafting a report--*Decent Work and the Informal Economy*--on working conditions and rights for workers in informal and contingent jobs. NAFFE staff members and delegates from NAFFE groups



took part in fact finding meetings and offered comments and suggestions for the report. It calls for the extension of all labor rights and social protections to all workers, regardless of employment status. Karin will lobby ILO delegates to vote for the report's adoption by the ILO's membership.

While the ILO has no enforcement

power, its recommendations carry significant weight. Governments frequently incorporate ILO conventions into national law. Trade treaties sometimes reference ILO standards. And social movements--like NAFFE--can use ILO standards to pressure corporations and governments for adoption of the internationally recognized standards.

## Frontlines: Up to 5,000 immigrant day laborers exposed to toxins in WTC cleanup

As the cleanup of the World Trade Center debris draws to an end, it is becoming apparent that the nearly 5,000 immigrant day laborers and 1,000 volunteers working at the site were exposed to toxic dust. Public health offices had assumed that the dust contained asbestos and would require professional cleaning, however air filter respirators were used only sporadically by the volunteers and immigrant workers who participated in the clean up.

A Queens College medical team examined 410 workers from Ecuador, Colombia, Peru and the Dominican Republic. Nearly all workers suffered from two groups of symptoms including upper airway irritation and headaches, insomnia, poor appetite and dizziness. Dr. Stephen Levin of Mt. Sinai School of Medicine remarks that, "It's a public health outrage they were allowed to be exposed in this way." Cancers linked to asbestos almost certainly would not appear for decades. (Source: Associated Press 5/19/02 "Hundreds of workers cleaned potentially hazardous trade center dust without standard protections")

## "E-Procurement" or how Verizon Wireless hopes to cut out the middleman

A new trend is picking up steam: companies are putting their temp labor needs out to bid in the same way that they put their need for any commodity out to bid. This purely cost driven bidding is likely to drive wages even lower. Verizon's wireless division is using a new software package to automate its hiring of outside contractors. The system reportedly offers a two year return on investment and increases the competition between consultants and contract labor providers.

The software, called the Fieldglass system, allows the hiring manager to create a work order for a new consultant and then circulates it to the management staff for financial and budget approval. Upon approval, the requisition is sent to several providers and they bid on the contract, knowing it is being sent automatically to a variety of providers, which makes the bidding much more competitive. The requisition goes out with a target cost. A Verizon manager reported that, "even in its initial pilot run, it was clear to our providers that this was a truly competitive environment and we received many resumes under target." The pilot apparently went so well that in October, Verizon entered into a multi-year agreement for the Fieldglass application.

Similar "Employee Resource Management" and "E-procurement" programs are available in most other industries. The Texas-based Pantellos Group provides a package targeting the utility and energy industry; Workbrain Inc. targets project-based labor in the construction, operations, maintenance, engineering/design management industries. (Sources: *Purchasing* 5/16/02; Pantellos Group/Business Wire 5/22/02)

## Worker Center Report

NAFFE's report on worker center strategies will be available May 30--the first in a series on strategy. The purpose of the series is to raise questions and provide information necessary for effective strategy. "Worker Center Strategies" surveys a dozen existing worker centers and provides some historical background for evaluating the effectiveness of worker centers. In brief, the report argues that worker centers offer an important venue for organizing that can be adapted to meet the needs of workers in difficult to unionize, contingent jobs. By "bundling" an assortment of tactics, worker centers offer a holistic approach to organizing that goes beyond the workplace or the industry. This is especially important among high turnover groups like day laborers that change employers, workplaces, and industries regularly.

The report served as a backdrop for the recent meeting the Temporary and Day Labor Action Group in Chicago. Eight allied organizations and networks that operate worker centers/hiring halls were invited to participate.

Delegates discussed key issues about worker centers at the three day meeting. There was a broad consensus on a range of issues. A checklist of standards for worker centers was agreed upon and is included in the report. An action plan to guide NAFFE's work in the coming year, which features ways in which NAFFE can encourage the growth of worker centers, was sketched out. The plan will be discussed in later editions of News & Comment.

## To NAFFE Members

### Premier Issue

This is the first issue of *News and Comment*. We hope to produce several issues each month. Our goal is to summarize important news, and to report on significant activities of NAFFE and its members. *News and Comment* will appear in hard copy and electronically. But, we need your help. Tell us what kind of news you want included. Send us stories or comments. As time goes by, and with your help, we'll get better at producing *News and Comment* and it will become an important source of relevant information.

### New Co-Coordinator

We are pleased to introduce Suren Moodliar, the newest member of the NAFFE staff. Suren is the new Co-Coordinator, and his arrival in the office completes NAFFE's three-person staff team.

Suren has worked in the progressive movement as an international organizer for a corporate watchdog organization, a union organizer as part of the effort to unionize the University of California's academic student employees, and as a participant in immigrants' rights and affirmative action struggles in the 1990s. In the 1980s, he worked in the South African national liberation struggle as a supporter of the African National Congress. While working on corporate accountability issues, he helped coordinate the Network for Accountability of Tobacco Transnationals that successfully pressed the World Health Organization to monitor the political activities of tobacco transnational corporations.

Suren will be introducing himself to many of you over the next few weeks, in action group conference calls and individually. Also, please feel free to call the office and say hello.

## Labor Ready-employed telemarketing temps settle class action lawsuit against Chicago-area car dealer, Bob Watson Chevrolet

Nearly seventy principally African American women settled a class action lawsuit against Bob Watson Chevrolet. The women complained about sexual harassment that included groping and demands for sexual favors. Although Bob Watson management claimed to have provided written notification to their permanent employees of their right to object to sexual harassment, in court papers, they accepted that temporary employees were not regularly provided with the same information. Each woman will receive at least \$3,000. Lawyers representing the workers did not target **Labor Ready** "because it was Bob Watson managers who harassed company workers, working under the exclusive supervision of Bob Watson management." Bob Watson will also have to ensure that employees receive sexual harassment training. (Sources: Chicago Daily Law Bulletin, 5/23/02; Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, 5/23/02)

## WWW.SCAB.ORG: "Be a part of the largest strike ever staffed"

It's no joke. San Francisco-based temp agency **Healthcare Consulting & Staffing Services** is running a website, [scab.org](http://scab.org), to recruit nurses as strikebreakers for the anticipated May 29, 2002 **California Nurses Association** strike (CNA) at the University of California system (UC). Agency scabs are offered \$1000/day to replace the 8,000 nurses expected to strike. CNA authorized the strike in response to UC violations of the negotiations process, a discriminatory compensation system, and to support CNA proposals for implementation of safe staffing ratios and a ban on the use of mandatory overtime. (Sources: Los Angeles Times, 5/21/02; Sacramento Bee, 5/18/02; [www.scab.org](http://www.scab.org); California Nurses Association, [www.igc.apc.org/cna/](http://www.igc.apc.org/cna/))

## Gain Seen For Household Worker Rights

The New York City Council is poised to pass an ordinance to protect the rights of the tens of thousands of mostly immigrant household workers dispatched by agencies. **Domestic Workers United** has pushed the ordinance which will require each worker to receive a written agreement on wages and working conditions and a detailed job description. Following a hearing on May 6, council members predicted passage of a strong bill by the end of the year. (Village Voice, 5/15-21/02)

## New Repertoires: Immigrant workers in Kuwait stage sit-in at embassy

200 Bangladeshi workers organized a sit in at the Bangladesh embassy, forcing it to mediate between the workers and their Kuwaiti employer. The workers had not been paid their monthly salary of \$82 for the last five months. The sit-in resulted in the Embassy filing complaints with the Kuwaiti Ministry of Social Affairs & Labor and Foreign Ministry. Some 160,000 Bangladeshi nationals work in Kuwait. Most of the 200 workers involved in the sit-in had paid up to \$2,000 to a recruiting agency for placement in Kuwaiti companies. (Source: Kuwait Times, 5/21/02)