

(Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extension of Remarks.)

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 4101, DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1999

Mr. SOLOMON (during the special order of the gentleman from Michigan, Mr. BONIOR) from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 105-593) on the resolution (H. Res. 482) providing for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 4101) making appropriations for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1999, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

UNIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BONIOR) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I am joined tonight by my colleagues, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) who just spoke, the chief deputy whip of our party, the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO), the gentlewoman from California (Ms. BARBARA LEE), and the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LYNN WOOLSEY), as well.

We are here this evening, Mr. Speaker, to talk about unions. We say that word with pride. Earlier this year, many of us heard powerful, real life experience stories by Betty Dumas, Cathy Sharp, and Juan Mazylmian about the challenges they faced when they tried to organize their workplace; a basic right, to organize your workplace for wages, for benefits.

For Juan, he and his fellow asbestos removal workers in New York won union recognition and a shot at a better life. For Cathy Sharp, she struggled in a hospital system where she worked in San Diego and she won union recognition, and a contract that gives nurses more input into the care of their patients.

For Betty Dumas and her fellow workers at the Avondale shipyard in New Orleans, their fight goes on. It is a brave fight, but their resolve remains stronger than ever. They will win that fight, because they are standing up for folks who they work beside every day who are deprived of decent wages and decent benefits and the things that many of us take for granted today at the workplace.

These three individuals touched us in a very special, fundamental way when they spoke to us at our conference in Virginia. We understood their fights

were for basic human respect and for basic human dignity.

This week, and particularly on the 24th of June this week, many of us are lending our voices and our support to working men and women around the country. We will be speaking out about their efforts to improve their future. On the 24th, a day to make our voices heard, workers will be showcasing their ambitions and their visions and their successes, and yes, even their heartaches, in their effort to come together to form a union.

It is not easy to do. I will talk about that in a second. There are activities planned in over 70 communities to highlight workers' basic, fundamental rights to organize. From Seattle to Miami and from Burlington to San Diego there will be activities to celebrate past victories, and to remind us of the work that is yet to be done.

Some will say, how difficult is it to join a union? To give you some idea of how hard it is for workers to join together to form a union, let me try to offer an analogy. Imagine waking up the morning after the November election and reading the headlines: Challengers win; challenger wins. Incumbent files objection to the way the election was conducted. The court will issue a decision within 2 to 5 years. Incumbent to hold office pending outcome of litigation. End of headline.

This sounds absurd and profoundly undemocratic, but that is what is happening. That is what is happening to workers in our country whenever they win an NLRB election. That is the National Labor Relations Board's election.

Just winning takes tremendous courage and resolve. Employers and their sophisticated anti-union consultants commonly launch campaigns of terror and fear against workers who try to form a union. Once a worker steps onto their employer's property, their basic human rights of free speech and freedom of assembly and free press, they get left at the curbside.

Workers face union-busting tactics such as threats of being fired or taking away their health insurance; or being forced to attend a compulsory anti-union meeting, either in large groups or in one-on-one shakedown sessions; or threats of moving the plant to Mexico or other countries.

There is in this country, and I am sad to report this, but there is in the country today a multi-million dollar industry that is established just to quash organizing drives in America. Against these odds, workers need all the help they can get.

That is why more and more organizing drives have become community campaigns. Religious and community leaders are speaking out more and more to improve the quality of life of their families and friends and neighbors. There is greater recognition that these drives are part of a larger cause, the fight for human rights and for basic justice.

Organizing not only improves the lives of individual workers, but also the entire community. When those wages go up because workers can come together and band together and bargain for a good contract and good wages, that money gets circulated throughout the community and everyone benefits. It does not stay in a few pockets.

Organized workers get contracts and salaries which set the standard for other workers in the community who may not be unionized, so they bring up everybody's wages, not just union workers.

There is a huge wage gap in this country today. I think everybody realizes that that gap is growing, and it is as wide as it has been in decades. It is wider than any other western democratic society, capitalist society, today. Today the struggle to reduce the ever-expanding wage gap between the top 20 percent and the rest of us is an important struggle, and it will be the struggle that will be waged over the next decade.

The only way to restore some semblance of economic justice to this country is if the labor movement grows. When the labor movement grew after the Second World War, the pie for America was shared by all. When productivity grew 90 percent, wages grew 90 percent during the 1950s. But during the 1960s and the 1970s and 80s and 90s, we saw that productivity continue to grow but the wage level for workers continued to decline. It declined significantly. That is why we have this huge wage gap.

One of the reasons it declined is because membership in unions across the country, which was at a high of about 40 percent in the 1950s, has slipped to about 15 percent today, and about 10 percent among the private sector.

The workers' struggle for union representation and free association is deeply interlinked with overall economic disparity and participation in our democracy. In order to win, we need to build an alliance between union members, churches, progressive organizations, and public officials who care about workers.

If we can do that, if we can shed some light on union-busting activities going on in the workplace, we can win this battle. Winning takes a good deal of teamwork. Members of Congress I believe have a responsibility to speak out.

That is why about a week ago, at my alma mater, the University of Iowa, I was saddened to see that the university's hospital system is fighting the right of 2,000 registered nurses and professionals to organize with the Service Employees International Union. Not only are they fighting it, the university has hired a known union-busting firm, Management Service Associates, MSA, to try to defeat the organizing drive.

So I called several officials at the university to ask them to terminate

their association with MSA, and to take a neutral stance in the organizing drive to allow workers to determine for themselves, in a free and open and a democratic way, if in fact they wanted to band together to bargain collectively for their wages and their benefits and their work.

It is my understanding that Senator HARKIN has done the same thing.

□ 2130

The situation in Iowa is just one of the organizing drives that is being highlighted this week. There are many truly remarkable success stories throughout the country that are part of what we call "A Day to Make Our Voices Heard." I just want to mention a couple of them now, and then I will be happy to yield to my colleagues.

In Detroit, some 2,000 employees at the Detroit Medical Center won an agreement that states when a majority of workers sign cards in support of a union, the employer will recognize the union. So they will not have to go to the NLRB and wait 2 years, and 3 years, and 4 years, and 5 years to be recognized. That is the way to break unions, by not recognizing what the people democratically have voted for.

The card check, which is basically people standing up and saying, "I want it," will cut through all of that red tape and restore the economic democratic feature of union organizing.

In Dallas, 9,000 teachers won representation by the American Federation of Teachers, partially because they worked hard to elect a sympathetic school board.

In Cincinnati, 350 school bus drivers gained representation by the Amalgamated Transit Union with the help of the clergy, the NAACP, and elected school board members and other unions. They all banded together as community and said we think this is important, that people ought to have a right to come together democratically to bargain for the sweat and the work that they perform for our community.

In Washington, D.C., 700 parking lot attendants won representation by the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees and a first contract by gaining support from the leaders in the Ethiopian community. They went to the community that had a stake in this. Parking lot customers, property owners, the Ethiopian community all came together and said there ought to be economic justice for these people.

The list continues from Brookline, Massachusetts, to New Haven, Connecticut, to Watsonville, California, and all across the country. And that is why many of us are gathered here tonight and will participate in other activities throughout the week.

When organizing drives are successful, they empower communities in ways we cannot imagine. For workers throughout the country the fight for dignity and respect is truly a fight about basic democratic rights.

So tonight we stand with those workers who have stood together to make a

difference in their communities. And we also stand with those workers who are still fighting to organize. The challenges are great and the courage that it takes so often is just mind-boggling. People standing up and saying they want to fight, knowing that in fact their wages could be gone the next day, their benefits taken away. They could be fined like Betty Dumas was fired over at Avondale.

People who rely on that check to take care of their kids every week, knowing that they are going out on a limb for economic democracy knowing the consequences. And many suffer the consequences. It takes great courage. The challenges are great, but it is worth it. Workers who build community coalitions and go through organizing drives are fundamentally participating in our democracy, taking pride in their work and building a better place to live, not only for them and their children but for future generations to come.

I think about my community in the Detroit metropolitan area, and I remember the struggle of the auto-workers back in 1936 and 1937 in the sit-down strikes in Flint and Detroit. My grandfather participated in those sit-down strikes. My father is a union man too. I remember him telling me he used to throw sandwiches into the auto-worker yards to those who were sitting down and would not move until they got their bargaining rights.

What does that mean for us today? It means that that struggle that went on in 1936 and 1937 provided us with a buoyant, resourceful, strong middle-class and provided good wages and health care benefits and built the middle class in this country. What it did was that movement provided us with a decent work hour, the 8-hour day, overtime pay, workers' comp, unemployment comp, health insurance. All of these benefits, pension benefits, cost of living increases that we take for granted today, they were built by the struggle of people who had the courage to say we have the right to bargain for our work, for our sweat, as a democratic right.

It seems like every week we see another headline about this million dollar merger or that billion dollar buyout. They keep getting bigger and bigger all the time. And in the process, a handful of people at the top, the CEOs who seem to get golden parachutes just for jumping out of bed in the morning, they become less and less accountable to our country and to our communities.

That is why unions are so important. Unions give working men and women a voice. They help level the playing field. Unions build a stronger democracy by giving people a say in the decisions that affect their jobs and their future. They honor the values of loyalty, commitment, pride, and community.

So it is with deep pleasure, Mr. Speaker, that I am here with my dear friends tonight talking about this ef-

fort, and this week and I would be delighted to yield to them for any comments that they would care to make this evening. I thank them for their indulgence.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY), my friend.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Michigan for yielding, and I would like to thank our wonderful minority whip for pulling this evening together and being so absolutely passionate about workers of this country. I thank him for leading the way.

Mr. Speaker, I knew the American workers were in trouble when one of the first changes that the Republicans made as the new majority was to completely eliminate, to remove the word "labor" from the committee that I served on. It was called the House Committee on Education and Labor. First they called it the Committee on Education and Economic Opportunities. Absolutely removing the word "labor." Then 2 years later, even the Republicans had trouble totally ignoring American workers so they changed the name again. This time it was to the Committee on Education and the Workforce. Again, no mention of labor.

The new name they tried to make them look softer, of course. But it did not. It did not change their negative attitude an iota. In fact, one Member of the new majority on the committee kept probing and pushing and insulting workers and those of us who supported American workers. One meeting, one hearing we had, and I will never forget it, this Member on the other side of the aisle referred to the Secretary of Labor, Robert Reich, as he was testifying before us, the Secretary of Labor, he referred to him as a Marxist and told him that he had read all of Carl Marx's writings and he had read all of Secretary Reich's writings and he saw no difference. This is the same Member who referred to me on the committee as a Communist because I was defending organized labor.

So that was a heads-up, and let me know what kind of year we were going to have and how hard we had to work, because working Americans were not going to be represented by the majority at this time in our House of Representatives.

Mr. Speaker, well, it was all right for me. He can call me anything he wants, because I want to tell my colleagues, I am one person who is very proud to speak out for organized labor, for the working men and women of this country. It is because of organized labor that we have a middle class in the United States. That is why we are the country that we are. That is why we are this great Nation. It is because of organized labor that American workers have been able to afford to work and raise a family on their wages. And they get benefits, if it is part of organized labor, pensions as part of organized labor.

Today, some of these expectations that people have that they were able to count on are eroding. We need labor unions more today than ever before. In the "Education and Anti-labor Committee" that I sit on, we are marking up a series of OSHA reform bills that will weaken the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. If these bills were to become law, American workers would be at a greater risk of on-the-job injuries and health effects and death than ever before. Well, not ever before, but since we have had OSHA in place.

Mr. BONIOR. And, Mr. Speaker, we still have today, it is my understanding, 50,000 Americans who lose their lives on the job every year. Fifty thousand.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, that is right. But since OSHA was passed in 1970, the job fatality rate has been cut in half and injury rates have also declined significantly. That ought to be example enough that we do not weaken it. If anything, we strengthen and learn from mistakes and we fix errors and we go forward and make sure that more people are safe than fewer. But Republicans in both the House and the Senate are pushing legislation that will make it more difficult for OSHA to issue protective standards; that will limit OSHA's ability to enforce our current standards, particularly in case of willful or criminal violations. Their legislation would weaken workers' right to know about unsafe workplace conditions, and would make it harder for them to address their own safety concerns within the workplace.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle seem to think that American workers have too many safety and health protections. Last year, 6,112 workers were killed by traumatic injuries, and that is a Bureau of Labor Statistics figure. Another 50,000 workers died, as the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BONIOR) said, from occupational diseases. And that is a National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, NIOSH, statistic. And more than 6.2 million workers in the private sector were injured on the job. That is an AFL-CIO statistic.

Thank goodness workers have unions to help them fight the Republicans' effort to turn back the clock on worker safety. These bills should be called "OSHA deform." It should not be called reform. They are trying to undo the progress we have made instead of build on the progress and go forward.

Unions are also speaking up for American workers against legislation that would diminish workers' wage and hour protection under the Fair Labor Standards Act. We have comp time legislation. We have sales incentive compensation acts that have been passed out of this House. Both of them would be all right if the worker had a choice. If they wanted to participate in a comp time program, then it would be their choice, not the employer's. If the worker wanted to go without overtime pay

to work in a less than \$20,000 a year job, that would be the worker's choice. But, no, it will be the employer's choice.

They are also working on legislation that would legalize company-formed and controlled unions, and that is called the TEAM Act. Legislation would make it impossible for unions to speak for workers in the public arena. And that is the Paycheck Fairness Act and campaign finance reform.

The gentleman spoke about the wage disparity between American workers and their bosses. He said that this disparity has never been greater. In 1960, we will go there first, the average pay for a chief executive officer of the largest U.S. corporations was 12 times greater than the average wage of a factory worker. That was in 1960. Today those CEOs receive wages and compensations worth more than 135 times the wages and benefits of the average employee at the same corporation.

In 1960, it was 12 times greater. In 1998, it is more than 135 times greater. We wonder what is happening to our middle class. It is all going to the top and the working poor are getting greater and greater.

Today, millions of Americans came to work. They came on time. They did a good job. They worked in the workplace to the very best of their ability. And they did not earn enough money to bring themselves and their families above the poverty level. These workers and millions of others all across America need to join together, need to organize so that they can have better lives and so that the lives of their families will be more secure.

□ 2145

They join labor unions so that they can improve their wages, their working conditions, their benefits, their safety conditions and their future pensions.

I am proud, because I am supported and I do support nurses and teachers, firefighters, truck drivers, waitresses, carpenters, electricians and all the other working men and women of this country, and those who belong to labor unions.

Union members work every day to keep America strong and to keep America safe. I am proud to work here in the Congress for them and for all working men and women in this country.

I thank the gentleman, again, for pulling this evening together.

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her eloquent statement, a statement with passion.

I just wanted to pick up on one point that the gentlewoman from California made. That is the disparity that has been created because of the lack of union representation in this country today. We have a minimum wage in this country that pays \$5.15 an hour. We have 12 million people working in America who earn the minimum wage, 12 million people. We have another 8 million just above the minimum wage,

about 20 million people working at that minimum wage level.

For a single mom with two kids, do you know what that minimum wage wage pays? It pays less than \$11,000 a year. That is \$2,600, as the gentlewoman said, below the poverty level today for a family of three. And when we talk about unions, unions do not have folks in their organizations that make the minimum wage. Very few do. They make a good wage, but they argue for the minimum wage because they understand the moral responsibility to make sure that people live on a living wage today. So they help not only folks who belong to those organizations, union organizations, but they help others as well.

We can do a much, much better job in our country today in moving forward with decent wages and benefits than we have. So I thank my colleague from California for her comments tonight.

Mr. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, if the gentlewoman will continue to yield, when we talk about the minimum wage, when we were voting to pass and raise the minimum wage a year or so ago, my very favorite delicatessen in Petaluma where I get my coffee, because it is the best any place, the owner came to me and said, "Oh, Woolsey, don't raise the minimum wage. How am I going to stay in business?" And all his workers were very quiet, and I said, Steve, just think how many more people could come in and afford your coffee lattes if they earned enough money so that they could have this privilege to come in here like I do. And all of his workers cheered.

Mr. BONIOR. That is a good story. It is not just the people in restaurants and coffee shops, it is the people who take care of our children at day care, take care of our parents and our grandparents in elder care and nursing homes, the folks who clean our offices, who are cleaning them right now, a lot of folks are making wages, and they have no recourse in terms of getting a better wage or getting the benefits they need, the health care for their family or kids, because they do not have anybody representing them.

That is what unions do, they pool the resources of people together and they say, basically, we are going to work with you to help you get represented at the bargaining table for a decent wage and decent benefits.

When we had strong unions in this country that matched productivity, we had a healthy, very healthy economy. And we have watched that erode now, as union membership and other things have transpired, our trade policy and other things that have eroded the leverage of workers in our society today. I thank my colleague for her comments.

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO).

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I am just delighted to be a part of this effort tonight to join with my colleagues and

to thank the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BONIOR) for organizing this special order and particularly the conversation, the dialogue between yourself and the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) in a reminder about the early history of the labor movement, what it has created and your words, it created the middle class.

It created the place where the bulk of this country is coming from, the people who are the backbone of the United States. And what it accomplished in terms of safety in the workplace, fair and decent wages, the benefits that people enjoy today and oftentimes we forget, we forget what it was like, and we take so much for granted. That is why the notion of a June 24 and Americans honoring working men and women and helping others to remember and to organize and to get out there to help people who are trying to take some difficult first steps in trying to, one, hold on to what we have and to create new and better opportunities for working men and women in the country through unions, through a wonderful institution, the heart and soul of what the United States is about.

It is the thought of workers joining together to look at improving their living standards, their communities, their companies and making them better places. Oftentimes, as I said, we forget that, when we are together and we argue and fight, what a tremendous balancing force against runaway corporate power in this country and, again, one of your terms, economic justice. That is what the fight, that is what it is all about.

Mr. BONIOR. And also the economic democracy piece, I think people often overlook that aspect of organized workers of unions, of organized labor. What they brought to the democracy table of America. They infused America with a new group of people who were interested in government, in making sure that the city council worked, the school board worked, the State legislature worked, the Federal Government had representation that shared their views.

I think people often forget that it was a labor union movement in Poland that broke the back of Communism. It was Solidarity. Unions bring texture in many, many different ways. I think the gentlewoman from Connecticut has touched on one that moved me to respond.

Ms. DELAURO. My mother worked in a sweatshop.

Mr. BONIOR. I know she did.

Ms. DELAURO. In a sweatshop. It was because of the union movement, there are still problems, there are still sweatshops. We do not like to think about that, but that is the case. But we broke the back of that kind of work for people in this country and in this instance, in these industries, particularly for women, working for two pennies a collar or for 50 cents for making a whole dress and just slave labor. That is the guts of this.

I want to mention, you mentioned New Haven, Connecticut because we talk about what has happened in the past. We want to talk about modern day organizing and what we are about.

There was a recent, real big victory in New Haven, the labor movement, in organizing at the new Omni, the New Haven Omni hotel just this past April. The 230 employees, they won the right to openly choose their own union through a card check, union cards signed by a majority of the employees.

It was a real victory over the longstanding insistence of the corporation for a secret ballot. How did this occur in essence? It is, again, the new organizing, through community efforts, having local government, the Federal Government. I was proud to work with the union folks, civil rights groups, clergy, academics, students who worked together. They had hearings. They met with hotel managers. They threatened boycotts. But more than that, they participated in a dialogue.

It was a communitywide dialogue about why we needed for local 217 to be able to sign these cards to determine whether or not there would be a union there. That is the kind of engagement we need today. That is what is going on. And as you have said so often, we should not be afraid, as public servants, as public officials, to engage in this process, because it is not going to be something that is happening in isolation over here, where no one is paying attention, because the movement today, the union movement today is as relevant to people's lives for all the reasons that you gave and our colleague from California gave and so that it has got to be alive. It has got to be vibrant, and it has to be strong.

It is only through the engagement of those of us who oftentimes have a microphone and can serve with others that we can help to better the livelihood of those in our society today who, in fact, have seen their wages either stay the same or to go down over the last couple of decades. When we have seen the top of the scale, the CEOs, seeing their salaries increase and their stock options increase and people laid off in this country.

There are lots of other Members who want to engage in this effort. I am just truly proud to join here today, and it should not be only June 24. We ought to be speaking out. We ought to be organizing and helping to make sure that we have people with decent living wages better than that and that they have the kinds of workplace conditions that they are entitled to for their daily labor.

Mr. BONIOR. I thank my colleague for her comments. They are very apt and very well and passionately delivered.

I yield to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS).

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. As I listened to you and the gentlewoman, you just sort of sparked some memories of mine. And especially as we talked

about how much a part of our democracy union organizing and the development of labor unions is. I am reminded that Benjamin Franklin, one of the fathers of the country, father of the Constitution, Franklin organized the printer's union and one of the very first unions that existed. I mean Benjamin Franklin, even then, understanding the need for people to come together.

Then we go down the line, Franklin Delano Roosevelt etched the right to organize into the legal component of our country, of our country. Martin Luther King was actually organizing sanitation workers in Memphis when he was killed. So there has always been a relationship between the quest for overall freedom and development of all people in this country and the organization of labor unions.

Actually, Benjamin Franklin was also an abolitionist, so there was an easing merging of the recognition of both.

One of the reasons, I think, that other nations with all of our problems, with all of our needs, but one of the reasons that other nations often seek to emulate us is because we have this ongoing component of struggle, never ending, always becoming, always recognizing, yes, we have made a lot of progress, we have come a long way, but there is still great distances to go.

□ 2200

We see plant closings all over America. We see individuals who have been displaced by the hundreds and thousands. An interesting statistic, the individuals who are displaced, generally, many of them never ever reach the point of earning the same amount of money afterwards that they were earning before they lost their basic job.

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, can I share a story with the gentleman on that very point? I did not mean to interrupt, but I wanted to tell a little story that hits that very point.

I was on a bus trip down to Atlanta, Georgia with the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LEWIS) and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. STUPAK), a few of my colleagues.

We visited Lucent Industries. They made telephones. This company had lured people from all over the country to come to work in this sort of center gathering factory outside of Atlanta. After a while, they closed their shops and went to Mexico to make these phones.

I remember meeting a woman in the parking lot, because 300 of them showed up to greet us to talk about how they all lost their jobs. This woman by the name of, I think it was Annie Harris, told us she was being paid \$13.50 an hour. She was a member of the Communication Workers. She had a pension. She had health care. She had a good job; \$13.50 an hour to make these telephones.

When they closed up shop, she lost her job. They went to Mexico and paid

their workers \$1 an hour to make their phones. She got, as the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) pointed out, another job. She worked a cash register at Target department store. She sold that same phone that she used to make for prices that are the same or more than they were being sold when she was making \$13.50 an hour.

So it is right, people are working in this country. The unemployment rate has come down, but often, as the gentleman just pointed out, people who do not belong to unions today are working at levels far below what they were making when they had jobs where they were being represented by unions.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. The gentleman mentioned SEIU organizing, and I am reminded of an incident that recently happened in my community where I was just totally saddened.

There was an effort to organize a group of hospital workers. Some members of the African American community took the position that why should blacks join a labor union. They sort of launched a campaign by saying, well, the unions have not done anything for African Americans. I was pained, because I was saying to myself, "How little you actually know. How little you really understand."

A. Philip Randolph, who put together the Sleeping Car Porters, who became a group of very dignified individuals who traveled all over America taking not only information, not only doing their work, but oftentimes taking black newspapers to parts of the country where there were not any, taking the Chicago Defender, the Pittsburgh Courier, the Chronicle, papers and information.

So I just want to commend you, again, for putting together this opportunity for us to continue to raise our voices, to continue to recognize the need to implement those men and women who are on the firing lines every day, working to raise the quality of life and the level of living not only for themselves, but for all of America.

I certainly am pleased to join with the gentleman. I want to see the minimum wage raised to what becomes what we call a livable wage. I think America will flourish as we continue to organize and develop our people.

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman very much for his thoughtful statements and his historical perspective on one of our Founding Fathers.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to yield to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE).

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, first, I want to express my appreciation for the leadership that the distinguished gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BONIOR), the Democratic whip, has consistently given on the difficulties that working people experience in this country.

The gentleman's deep commitment to economic justice for wage earners is reflected in the work that he has done in this House, of which the special

order on "A Day To Make Our Voice Heard" is a part. This is my first time, really, that I have participated in a special order since being elected to the House of Representatives.

Mr. BONIOR. We welcome the gentlewoman, and we appreciate her participating and speaking out on this issue.

Ms. LEE. Yes. I am proud that my first time out is about the importance of labor unions and working men and women and how they have enhanced and continue to struggle to enhance the quality of life for all Americans.

On June 24, working women and men all over this country will rise to speak out about their efforts to improve their and their families' lives. Many of these working people have joined with others in unions to strengthen their individual efforts to better their lives.

In organizing as groups of workers, there are many stories of successes, but there are also tragic stories of heartaches in these attempts. Some of us forget, and younger ones have not been taught, that part of the American economic miracle of our country is the value placed on labor.

With the enormous exception of the labor forced from captured, enslaved Africans and indentured labor from Asia and other continents, the price of labor in the United States, as compared to the rest of the world, was high.

African Americans have a proud history of organizing. We know that early labor organizers suffered broken bones and death on the picket line. As difficult as these battles were, we know that it was even more trying for African Americans.

We can be proud of brother C. L. Dellums, the uncle of my predecessor, Congressman Ronald V. Dellums. C. L. Dellums, from Oakland, California, was one of the primary organizers of the Sleeping Car Porters Union and the California counterpart to the A. Philip Randolph Trade Union Movement.

The Sleeping Car Porters Union was the first black union. The establishment of this union changed the perception of African Americans in America. Prior to that time, African Americans were brought in to break strikes by taking advantage of their financial oppression. We just heard from the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) that this is still occurring in this country. Employers use the classic strategy of pitting oppressed worker against oppressed worker, black, white, Asian, Latino.

The formation of this black union changed the whole labor dynamic in America because black labor could see that we could be part of a union movement, and thus this was a very significant step in the American labor movement.

These bloody battles waged by our labor progenitors brought better wages, health care, pensions, housing for workers. But we also know that battles, even those that were won at great costs, were not known or valued

by those who did not struggle. So we have to learn and fight anew.

We do have recent successes. One, of course, is the defeat of Proposition 226 in California in the last June primary.

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, it was a fascinating effort and wonderful effort by workers coming across California to make this happen. Someone told me that 26,000 people were activated to defeat this antiworker provision.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman is absolutely correct. But it was not only defeated by labor unions and workers, it was a coalition of young people and unemployed. It was a fabulous coalition. I believe that is a testament as to what is really going on in this country.

This was an attempt to block employee contributions to unions. Yet, it would have continued to allow corporate contributions to political campaigns. The issue alarmed and energized voters all over California and all over the country and brought out 7 percent more voters actually in my district. Proposition 226 was defeated 53 percent to 47 percent.

Flowing from that success is the failed attempt now to place a similar bill on Nevada's ballot. A Nevada court ruled that the proposal was a violation of the First Amendment right of free speech. But workers who try to gain decent, living wages and working conditions oftentimes have to pay dearly for their successes.

Were working conditions and wages adequate, working people would not spend the time or the money or expose themselves to the dangers, and there are some real dangers that come with fighting for economic justice.

A decision to strike only follows when workers collectively blow the whistle on work conditions. It is really the final straw used to get the attention of the employer.

The employer's retaliatory lockouts, business closures, and transfers of operation to Mexico, Indonesia, and China, with their pools of exploited labor, threaten the very livelihood of workers and their families here in America.

Workers take action knowing that the cost of gaining dignity at work is the likely destruction of their livelihood and family economic security. We need international unions to protect workers all over the world.

Let me just tell you, in California, workers who live in my district and who work in Burlington Northern/Santa Fe's Richmond Intermodal Yard were fired because they joined the ILWU last September. As soon as they negotiated decent wage and benefits at \$12 an hour, the railroad took away the contract to load and unload its trains and gave it to another contractor, Parsec, a company with a long history of union busting.

According to the 1998 newsletter called Labor Notes, a worker named Sabrina Giles went to work 7 years ago keeping track of huge shipments at the

yard. Over the years, she trained one worker after another in the difficult art of tracking the million-dollar cargos shipped by giant corporations.

But while others moved up to better jobs and higher pay, she stayed on in one place watching her wages inch slowly from \$8 to \$9.50 an hour. The people she saw moving ahead were mostly white, she says, the friends and relatives of supervisors. According to Giles, who is an African American woman, this yard was full of favoritism, racism, and sexism.

A couple of points on the farm workers in California I would like to mention. Farm workers have been struggling for decades for the right to organize and have minimally decent working conditions. The situation of the strawberry workers in Watsonville, California is extreme and has consequences not only for the workers but for their children.

The most dangerous life-threatening aspect of their work is constant exposure to a wide range of very powerful pesticides and insecticides. Women farm workers suffer the additional burden of sexual harassment.

A third problem concerns not only the health of the worker, but the health of the consumers of strawberries and other produce because of the lack of toilet facilities in the field. Why do we wait until we have a severe epidemic of hepatitis before we react? The problem has persisted over and over and over again.

Also we are looking at the issue of janitors on the West Coast that are mostly immigrant men and women. They work for minimum wages, for no benefits, more than the normal workload, and many of these workers are employed by contractors who sometimes keep up to 50 percent of their wages.

We held hearings when I was in the California Senate, and we found that contractors negotiated a dollar amount for the contract. Subsequent to that, they paid the workers about 50 percent less than what they were being reimbursed for. Unfortunately, these workers now have no benefits. And now they are trying to circumvent the unions by having their employees form company unions, which offer substantial benefits and circumvent any effort to improve the working conditions.

So the Janitors for Justice effort to improve working conditions continues, and we will not rest until each and every janitor is treated with justice and with fairness.

Finally, and let me just say, most of my colleagues I know serve constituents, the majority of whom are not CEOs and millionaires. So I urge this Congress to react by enacting legislation that supports working people.

I want to thank the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BONIOR) for allowing the American people to hear stories tonight of the importance of our labor union movement and the actual successes and the struggles of working men and women in this country.

Mr. BONIOR. I thank the gentleman from California (Ms. LEE) for her comments and her passionate concern about this issue and for talking about 226 and the farm workers and the janitors that need justice and for her comments. We thank her for participating tonight.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to my friend the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GREEN), my good friend, for comments.

Mr. GREEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank our Democratic whip for organizing this special order in recognition of June 24, when American workers will use the day to celebrate victories we have had in protecting the right to organize and bargain collectively to improve living standards and working conditions. This is an important day I think we need to remember but also recognize we still have a long way to go.

The right to join a union is a basic civil right, and unions are an avenue to equity, fair treatment, and economic stability for working people. I know hearing my colleagues tonight, and the gentleman mentioned it earlier, around the world, the right to bargain collectively and independently is so important to industrialized democracies; in Poland, the success of the solidarity union. Around the world, in China and some of our, both competitors and countries we try to work with, the right to organize and bargain collectively is so important.

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Let me just give a small commercial. I have a bill, H.R. 2848, the Labor Relations First Contract Negotiations Act. The bill was introduced to allow rights of employees to organize and bargain collectively for living standards. This bill would require mediation and ultimately arbitration if an employer and newly elected representative had not reached a collective bargaining agreement within 60 days. We have time after time in our country right now where there is an election, yet there is no contract months and months afterwards. Yet the workers have voted to have union representation. That bill is important. I would like to see if we had a bill this session I could at least have a debate on that piece of legislation so we can move that further, so they do not necessarily get bogged down in NLRB by both sides oftentimes, and either management or labor could exercise that right.

Let me talk about something that is happening in Harris County, in Houston, Texas on the 24th. Our Harris County AFL-CIO is having a Justice Bus Tour. Let me talk about the five stops they are going to have. One of them is our new baseball stadium that a lot of us supported in downtown Houston that is being predominantly built by nonunion labor. The building trades are fighting for fair wages and a voice for those workers. In fact, the International Union of Operating Engineers is currently conducting an orga-

nizing campaign with the crane operators there at that site. All of us love baseball. I know the gentleman does, too. I love the Houston Astros. We would like to make sure that the people building that stadium are being paid a fair wage.

The second stop is not actually in my district, where the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union, Local 4-227 has been locked out of Crown Petroleum for 2 years. I have been out there for those anniversaries of that lockout. I have spoken at the union hall about Crown Petroleum's not being able to negotiate with their workers who are my constituents and live all over Harris County but the plant is actually in my district. That is so wrong for those workers there.

The third stop will be at Union Tank Car Company. Last April, the United Steel Workers won an election for the workers by a two to one margin. The company disregarded the workers' choice and used delaying tactics and legal challenges to overturn the election. The workers there will speak to the fact that Union Tank Car disrespected the decision made by its workers and is using a variety of tactics to keep the union out. Over 100 workers are expected to meet that justice bus there at that location. The event is also being coordinated with one of the company's headquarters in Chicago, so between Houston and Chicago hopefully we will get Union Tank Car's attention.

The fourth stop will be at a Kroger grocery store represented by United Food and Commercial Workers, both Locals 408 and 455. The grocery store workers will award Kroger for being such a good employer that respects their workers. They will also thank Kroger for its support for the United Farm Workers in their organizing efforts for the strawberry workers in California.

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I think that is a really important point, that we recognize the corporations and the companies who respect their workers and treat them with dignity. I am glad that part of the justice bus tour in Houston is going to do that, is going to let the community know that these people are really part of the community, they care about it, they care about the workers and the people who shop in their store. Kroger deserves a lot of credit.

Mr. GREEN. There is both positive and negative reinforcement in this tour. Another stop will be at Columbia Lighting, represented by the IBEW, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 716. The company tried to decertify, but they lost the election and so that company shut down that plant. That is so wrong at Columbia Lighting. The workers will talk about that company's attempt to get rid of the union. They failed on decertification but now they are just shutting the plant down.

We have a long way to go. We have a lot of success, a great history in our

country of recognizing workers, their right to organize. We have a long way to go. I want to thank the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BONIOR) for his effort tonight and look forward to continue working with him to make sure that not only do we fight for justice all over the world for workers but we also recognize we have to fight for it in our own country.

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas for all his support and help and for coming and staying late this evening to express his views on this.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE).

Mr. PAYNE. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, let me congratulate the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BONIOR) for the outstanding work that he continues to do and my colleagues who have taken time tonight to talk about this very important issue. I applaud working Americans, because on Wednesday, June 24, we will support workers' rights to organize a union. We know that this voice will be heard nationwide. They will share with us their desire to improve the working conditions and how unions help them achieve their goals for a better workplace.

Unions are good for America. They emphasize the fact that organizing unions is the basic American way. I believe that it is also important that we come together to promote policies which will help working people.

It has been documented that 77 percent of employers distribute anti-union literature, and that 50 percent of employers in one study threatened to fire all workers if they joined a union. Such anti-union efforts harm working Americans. First, on average, nonunion workers earn 33 percent less than their union counterparts. Second, these activities hamper the ability of working Americans to express their views on their work experience to their employer.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen this Congress try to suppress the voices of workers. They have attempted to pass legislation which would eliminate the ability of working families to participate in political activity cloaked under the guise of campaign reform. They have attacked the National Labor Relations Board, the body responsible for enforcing the National Labor Relations Act. Because those efforts have been unsuccessful, they have sought to overturn the National Labor Relations Act itself.

ON WORKERS' RIGHTS TO ORGANIZE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BLUNT). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, as I had indicated, there are a number of moves that have been done in this Congress.

I started to talk about the fact that there is a Section A(2)(a) in the National Labor Relations Act which gives the board equal footing. It is pro-labor, it is pro-corporate. But there is an attempt now to weaken the labor part of the National Labor Relations Act.

We have seen the TEAM Act, which is a bill that would allow the employer, the boss, to select a negotiating team. I think that we know that if you have the ability to pick the people who will negotiate with you, you will indeed select the weaker person.

There is an attempt in the District, in an appropriations bill, there was an attempt to eliminate Davis-Bacon on school construction in the District of Columbia. Davis-Bacon was a bill passed by two Republicans who wanted to keep the prevailing wage for working people when scalawags and carpet-baggers came in to drop the wages from the South into the North. Here we see an attempt to repeal the Davis-Bacon Act.

We have seen an attempt to end salting. Salting is simply a union worker who works in a nonunion shop, holds a card and on his time off, after work, on lunch hour, he may talk to other employees about perhaps becoming a member of a union. There is a bill working its way through the House to make it illegal for a person who is a salter to work.

We have seen the comp time. I worked on the clock. I drove a truck. I was a warehouseman, I was a lumber worker, I was a longshoreman, I was a waiter. Overtime was what was important as I worked my way through college and worked to keep my family's income high enough to support my family. The comp time bill will eliminate overtime. You will then get time off when the employer finds that there is time that things are slow. That is not fair. People need overtime. Low wage workers look forward to overtime. That is the only way they are able to make ends meet.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say that we must continue to push. June 24 is a time that we should all come together.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the minority whip to allow him to wrap up this outstanding job that he has done.

Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to applaud working Americans who on Wednesday, June 24th will make their support for the right to organize a union heard nationwide. They will share with us their desire to improve their working conditions and how unions have helped them achieve their goals for a better workplace. They will emphasize the fact that organizing unions is a basic legal right of all Americans. I believe that it is also a basic need for working Americans. Workers need to have the ability to join together and promote policies which advance their best interests. If workers are unable to express their views in an organized way, their voices will be silenced. Many companies and industry leaders support unions.

However, still others work to keep unions out of their shops and factories in an effort to

silence the voices of their employees. For example, it has been documented that 77 percent of employers distribute anti-union literature and 50 percent of employers in one study threatened to fire all workers if they joined a union. Such anti-union efforts harm the working American in many ways. First, on average non-union workers earn 33 percent less than their union counterparts.

Second, these activities hamper the ability of working Americans to express their views on their work experience to their employer. And most importantly, anti-union efforts block working Americans from being involved with industry decisions that affect their lives and the lives of their families.

The Republican-led Congress has done their part to suppress the voices raised in support of working Americans. They have attempted to pass legislation which would have eliminated the ability of working families to participate in political activity cloaked under the guise of campaign finance reform.

They have attacked the National Labor Relations Board, the body responsible for enforcing the National Labor Relations Act. And because those efforts have been unsuccessful, they have sought to overturn the National Labor Relations Act itself. We have seen the TEAM Act which allows the employer to select the negotiating team for the employees which would give the employer, the boss, unfair advantage in the negotiations. In an attempt to repeal *Davis-Bacon*, the prevailing wage law here in the District of Columbia for school construction there is a move to pass a law which will eliminate salting, a person who is a union member working at a non-union shop who on his or her own time tries to encourage people to consider becoming a member of a union. The Republican Party is opposing the proposed increase in the minimum wage. The Comp Time Bill which eliminates overtime because workers will be required to work overtime at straight time and will be given comp time at a later time.

The stakes are high. With all the anti-union sentiment among employers and the support that they have here among the Republican leadership in Congress, workers now more than ever before, must be empowered to advocate for and effect change in their working conditions.

There is no doubt that without unions, we will silence the average hard-working American. Such silence will only widen the income gap and increase the number of dissatisfied workers. That is why June 24th is important.

On that day we must celebrate those who have come together and worked for better representation and respect through union involvement. We also must make more Americans aware of their right to organize and help them not to be discouraged by their employers in their effort to organize.

In closing, I urge my colleagues here in Congress to support American workers everywhere by recognizing and celebrating the importance of union organization on Wednesday, June 24th.

Mr. BONIOR. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, let me just conclude with this final remark. The people that we are talking about tonight are the people who take care of our children in day care, the right for them to organize; the people who take care of our