



Labor Rights are Human Rights! AFSC Delegation Visits US– Mexico Border

by Emina Zlotrg

Grassroots activism for labor rights was the theme of a trip for ten people to Piedras Negras and Ciudad Acuña in northern Mexico from May 22 to 25. There we were hosted by the



Eleazar Vázquez, who works for Alcoa in Ciudad Acuña, speaks with David Lamarre-Vincent.

Comité Fronterizo de Obrer@s (CFO), the Border Committee of Workers, an organization with which the AFSC has had a long association. The point of the delegation was to learn about working conditions in the maquiladoras, as the export-oriented factories are known, and to build solidarity with maquiladora workers.

During our three day visit, we toured industrial parks, and met with workers for informal gatherings at their homes to listen to their stories.

Many of the workers mentioned hazardous conditions at work. Mateo, who works at Lear welding tracks for car seats, has injured his back, but still continues to work. He also emphasized the lack of ventilation where he works. Another worker described severe stomach problems as a result of unsafe drinking water at work. His employer ignored his health problem and no investigation has been done on the water issue.

Also, workers are underpaid. Maria Elena Robles, a CFO organizer, broke down for us household expenses and workers income.



Maria Elena Robles explains the cost of living for a typical family.

Reflections after one year at AFSC-NH....

An open letter from Maggie Fogarty

When I began working for AFSC last summer, I knew I was saying “yes” to a visionary and prophetic organization, and to a community of colleagues who could teach me a great deal about how to work for justice and peace in my home state. I fully expected that my work would connect me with the struggle for dignity and life that has been playing out across time and across continents.

My hopes were high that I would learn a great deal, and figure out where my own gifts and experiences could make a meaningful contribution to the work for economic justice which was already underway across New Hampshire.

It’s been about a year now, and I am eager to share with you my persistent delight in having joined such an inspiring, welcoming, and challenging network of allies and activists in the nonviolent struggle for justice and well-being. My heart is full of awe and gratitude for all that I have seen and learned. I want to thank you for whatever part you have played in my orientation and ongoing learning, and for the support for AFSC which makes it possible.

I have learned that women and men experiencing homelessness in Manchester are eager for allies in their struggle to defend their civil and human rights, and that there are devoted folks who step forward when asked to help draw attention to these grievances and to demand solutions.

I have learned that immigrants and refugees are a profound treasure in our communities. Survivors of war, extreme poverty and other trauma, they are courageously making a new home in our state and bringing a rich variety of language, culture, experiences and insights to our churches, schools and community organizations.

I have learned how complex are the obstacles to getting affordable housing built in New Hampshire, especially at a time when land and building materials are more expensive than ever. I was shocked to learn that it takes as many as 16 different sources of funding to build a decent, affordable multi-family rental property in New Hampshire. On the other hand, I have been gratified to encounter a fabulous network of non-profit developers who work miracles so that low-income individuals and families can have a safe, stable place to call home.

I have learned that it took more than a decade of devoted advocacy—in the form of community outreach and education, one-on-one conversations, workshops, press conferences and coalition building—to achieve the successful passage this year of legislation which clarifies the obligation of every New Hampshire municipality to offer “reasonable and realistic opportunities for the development of workforce housing.”

MAGGIE, continued on page 2

“Building on Our Success”



Sixty housing activists attended “Building on Our Success,” a June 12 gathering organized by AFSC to consider new initiatives for affordable housing in New Hampshire. Speaking to the urgency of the housing crisis, Maggie Fogarty said “the shortage of housing has to be taken seriously as the emergency it is.” Speakers at the meeting included Sheila Crowley of the National Low Income Housing Coalition, Ben Frost of NH Housing Finance Authority, Dick Ober of the NH Charitable Foundation, Ignatius MacLellan of the Northern New England Housing Investment Fund, and Maureen Beauregard of Families in Transition.

Maggie’s Reflections [from page 1]

And I have learned how grave are the consequences for a child, a family, or an elderly person who cannot feel secure in their housing, how traumatizing it is for someone to realize that their next “home” might be a makeshift camp in the woods; how housing insecurity disrupts a child’s development and sets her up for failure in school; and how a Section 8 housing voucher can give a family the security and relief that they need to succeed.

I have learned that there is no permanent solution to the shortage of affordable housing in New Hampshire that does not involve meaningful wage reform, so that all workers have access to basic security.

I have learned that high school students will sleep in cardboard boxes on a frosty October night, and listen rapt as formerly homeless men and women explain their paths to homelessness and to housing stability; and I have observed young people refuse to accept homelessness as inevitable in a nation as wealthy and entrepreneurial as ours.

And perhaps most importantly I have learned and relearned that relationships are at the heart of meaningful social change. The restored communities that we envision can only be created on a foundation of love and a commitment to listen to each other with respect. Our wellbeing is dependent upon our willingness to keep learning this.

It is a joy to be on this journey with you.

Maggie Fogarty coordinates the AFSC New Hampshire Economic Justice Project.

Healing the Wounds of War

Wars, sanctions and occupation in Iraq have created a humanitarian catastrophe for Iraqis; the lives and livelihoods lost are priceless and irretrievable. And the crisis is spreading; the chaos from the invasion and occupation is no longer contained by Iraq’s borders. Four and a half million people have been forced from their homes, making the war in Iraq the fastest growing refugee crisis in the world. Almost half of the displaced have fled to Jordan and Syria, while 2.5 million Iraqis are displaced within the country. These communities are vulnerable and traumatized by physical and emotional violence.

The human needs emerging from Iraqi displacement will not be met by military surges, spiraling war funding, or continued U.S. occupation. Funding international nongovernmental organizations and providing direct aid to countries hosting Iraqi refugees are the best ways to meet the immediate needs of millions of Iraqis. Meeting these needs is critical to ending the violence and creating the conditions for reconciliation in Iraq. The history of the Middle East shows that there are great consequences for slow or inadequate responses to the needs of refugees.

The first step in healing the wounds of war is to stop the violence. This is best achieved with the complete removal of all U.S. troops. This is what the majority of Iraqis want, and what the majority of Iraq’s elected officials want. This is what the majority of Americans want as well. No government in Iraq will be able to gain people’s confidence, or have real sovereignty, if its power depends on foreign military forces. Repair, trust, and reconciliation will move forward only when the military occupation ends.

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For more information, www.afsc.org/iraq.



 American Friends Service Committee

“a frontal attack on the rights of local government”

Maude Barlow Talks Trade

by Arnie Alpert

The provisions of international trade agreements will make it hard for states and localities to deal with a growing water crisis caused by pollution and depletion of groundwater, Canadian author/activist Maude Barlow told the NH Citizens Trade Advisory Commission March 31. Barlow, National Chairperson of the Council of Canadians, briefed the Commission during a New Hampshire stop on her speaking tour for her new book, *Blue Covenant: The Global Water Crisis and the Coming Battle for the Right to Water*.

Surface water is increasingly polluted world-wide, leading



to more reliance on extraction and shipment of ground-water over large distances, often across national borders, and increasingly under the control of private corporations, Barlow explained. That's why trade agreements, such as NAFTA and the rules administered by the World Trade Organization, are so important.

Under the trade regimes, commercial activity involving water is governed by rules governing investment, trade in goods, trade in services, and government purchasing. Under several investment agreements, including NAFTA, Barlow explained, foreign corporations have the right to sue for monetary compensation if they believe government actions erode their profitability. The disputes are resolved through arbitration panels, not in open court. Several of the most notable cases of NAFTA investment disputes, such as those stemming from a Canadian attempt to ban a poisonous gasoline additive, and the action of a Mexican state to protect environmentally sensitive land from a toxic landfill, had a direct bearing on water quality.

Barlow gave additional attention to the General Agreement on Trade in Service (GATS), one of the sets of trade rules in the WTO system, which she called “a frontal attack on the right of local governments to regulate on behalf of their citizens.” The GATS places strict limits on what governments

at all levels can do to regulate foreign companies in sectors already including wholesale and retail trade, transportation, and construction. Whether additional sectors with a bearing on water, health care, and education come under the sway of the GATS is a matter for ongoing negotiations. Under the principle known as “progressive liberalization,” WTO members are supposed to gradually place more and more of their service economies into the GATS framework, which explicitly applies to local and state governments as well as national ones, and states that all regulations must be market-oriented. In other words, regulations which are intended to protect non-market values, such as the environment or human rights, will be subject to challenge as unfair trade practices.

Another trade-related development under Barlow's watchful eye is the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP), which was created in 2005 by President Bush and his Canadian and Mexican counterparts. The SPP's purpose is to “harmonize” regulatory standards between the three NAFTA countries. If you wonder what could be wrong with “harmony,” Barlow pointed out that in the SPP, “the tendency is to move to the lowest common denominator,” in other words towards standards which are the least restrictive on the activities of businesses which operate across borders. Moreover, many of the committees created under the SPP operate in secrecy, she said. And water appears to be on the SPP agenda.

Barlow gave the Trade Commission four major recommendations: First, start talking about re-opening NAFTA after the election. Changes should include removing the provisions which allow foreign companies to bring compensation claims to closed-door tribunals, and to take water out entirely. Second, limit the scope of the GATS so that the WTO cannot be used to hamper the ability of governments to protect their citizens and provide necessary services, including water. Since the WTO “Doha Round” negotiations are stalled, this is a good time to raise this demand. Third, demand more information about the SPP. Finally, Barlow urged legislators to give more authority to municipalities to protect groundwater, especially from exploitation by bottlers. “These fights are springing up all over New England,” she said.

Paul O'Connor, who represents organized labor on the Citizens Trade Advisory Commission, called Barlow's talk “an eye opening example of what is wrong with our trade agreements,” which are being negotiated based on corporate interests. “It's bigger than just water,” he said.

Barlow's other stops included an appearance on NHPR's “The Exchange,” and a well-attended talk at Portsmouth Public Library, sponsored by AFSC, Save Our Groundwater, Clean Water Action, Seacoast Peace Response, the NH Sierra Club, and Citizens for Sludge-Free Land.

Late-breaking news ...

USA Springs Property for Sale

A foreclosure notice in the back of the June 9 *Union Leader* carried news that the USA Springs property in Nottingham is being sold at auction on June 30. The owners of the company, which planned to build a water bottling plant, apparently have run out of cash. Local observers say construction halted at the site several months ago. *For updates, visit www.saveourgroundwater.org.*

Solidarity at the Border

[cont'd from page 1]

On average, workers spend up to 100% of their income just on household expenses for the most basic items of their "food basket." Other household expenses, such as school supplies for children, are hard to afford on the \$50 to \$60 a week income that is typical for maquiladora workers.

We also met with CFO organizers, who told us about their projects, and we visited the Maquiladora Justicia y Dignidad (see article at right). As an organizer myself, I was impressed with the work they do educating and empowering workers on their rights under the Mexican Labor Law. Mexico's labor laws are good, but too often they are not enforced.

Likewise, I was impressed with the strength and courage workers showed. Despite a harsh living environment, they are involved with the CFO and act collectively to improve their working conditions. This was evident with the establishment of a workers committee to dialogue with Alcoa, which meets with management on an ongoing basis to discuss issues workers face.

In addition, our delegation spent an extra day in Taylor, Texas visiting the site of Don Hutto Residential Center. Hutto is an "immigrant detention center," i.e. a prison. Previously, it was a medium-security state prison. The center opened in the summer of 2006 and is specifically designed to hold undocumented non-Mexican immigrant families and children on non-criminal charges while they await asylum or deportation.



Jose Orta, Taylor Texas

and not prison type detention facilities.

Upon returning from Mexico, our delegates have committed ourselves to raise awareness about the labor struggles of the maquiladora workers by organizing events in our communities.

Emina Zlotrg is the AFSC-NH Youth Organizer. Other members of the delegation were Maggie Fogarty, Arnie



Roman Vázquez

Approximately 300 people are held in Hutto. We also had the chance to meet with Jose Orta, a local activist who gave us background on Hutto and the local community. Detaining undocumented immigrants is only a recent invention and growing. We need immigration reforms

Ordering T-shirts this year?

Justicia! The Ethical Clothing Label

The Maquiladora Dignidad y Justicia (Dignity & Justice Maquiladora Co.) is a worker-owned ethical clothing manufacturer and wholesaler created and sponsored by the Comité Fronterizo de Obrer@s (CFO), a Mexican workers' center.



Dignidad y Justicia, and its Justicia! label, are located in the border city of Piedras Negras, Coahuila, Mexico. The company was established by and for garment workers forced out of their jobs after

standing up for their rights in maquiladoras owned by large U.S. apparel corporations.

Dignidad y Justicia produces T-shirts, tote bags, and sweatshirts in organic and conventional cotton. The women, working in two workshops, have been able to pay themselves double the standard wages of the large maquiladoras and determine the terms of their employment.

There are only a few producers of sweat-free, fair trade and green apparel in the world. Dignidad y Justicia is one of them!

For information, visit www.cfomaquiladoras.org.



The AFSC-NH delegation with CFO hosts in Ciudad Acuña.

Alpert, David Lamarre-Vincent, Judy Elliott, Riva Pearson, Courtney Westbrook, Jenny Cook, Marissa Denis, and Elizabeth Bain. The delegation was coordinated by Austin Tan Cerca de la Frontera, a project of the AFSC office in Austin.

Immigrants and Supporters Rally in Manchester, Win at State House

MANCHESTER---With chants of "Liberty and Justice for All" and "Si Se Puede," 100 supporters of immigrants' rights gathered for a "Liberty and Justice For All" rally at Manchester's City Hall Plaza, May 1.

"We need national immigration reform that creates a path to citizenship for millions of undocumented people who are contributing to our communities and our economy," said Eva Castillo of the NH Alliance for Immigrants and Refugees, the rally's prime sponsor.

Similar rallies and marches took place throughout the country, marking a day that has become a nationwide day of action for immigrants and their allies.

"It's time to end the workplace raids and deportations which are destroying families," Castillo said. "It's time for equal access to health and education, and for the rights of all workers to be protected, regardless of where they were born."

Thanking Our Donors and Funders

We are happy to thank the 103 people who sent donations totaling more than \$7000 in response to our spring fund appeal.

We also send a big note of gratitude to the Clowes Fund for a three-year grant in support of our NH Economic Justice Project. The Clowes Fund is a family foundation established in 1952, in Indianapolis, which makes grants in Indianapolis, Seattle, and northern New England to support human services, education and the arts. We are grateful, too, to the Anne Slade Frey Charitable Trust for its support of the Economic Justice and Youth Empowerment Projects, and to the NH Charitable Foundation and the Vermont Community Foundation for general support.

If you have not yet sent a donation this year, please consider mailing a check to AFSC-NH. Your steadfast support keeps us going.

Concord Quakers to Build Meeting House

Concord Quakers are getting close to building their first Meeting House since the 19th Century. After renting several facilities for almost fifty years, forty of which were at the Merrimack Valley Day Care Center, the Meeting has been offered a site for free by the Appalachian Mountain Teen Project. A simple but attractive Meeting House will be built on quiet, wooded land close to I-93 in Canterbury.

AFSC-NH will have access to the building for meetings and other activities.

Construction will start this fall if enough money is raised by the end of summer. Meeting members and attenders have pledged about two-thirds of the needed money but they are still about \$150,000 short of their goal.

Donations of all sizes, all at once or over three years, can be given by contacting Ruth Heath, Meeting Treasurer, at 783-4401, or David Freeman-Woolpert, Finance Committee Clerk, at 223-6726.

CONCORD---On its last day of regular business for the year, the NH House of Representatives tabled a resolution calling completing of a fence along the US-Mexico border. The vote was perhaps more an indication of the legislators' desire to go home than it was a statement about the border. Nevertheless, it gave additional evidence that our legislature is not falling for the anti-immigrant sentiments common in other states.

As drafted, HR 25, urging Congress to fully implement the Secure Fence Act of 2006, was full of dubious statistics about problems caused by undocumented immi-

grants. When immigrants' rights activists raised objections, the resolution was sent back to the State-Federal Relations Committee, which approved an amended version without the most offensive language. But even then, the resolution still called for completion of the 700-mile fence and for extending it to the full 1951-mile border.

HR 25 was one of several harmful bills New Hampshire's immigrants' rights activists were watching this year. The worst, HB 1614, was soundly defeated in the House on March 5, by 241 to 79. It was a comprehensive bill combining many of the worst anti-immigrant proposals that have been floated in other states. Opponents included the NH Alliance for Immigrants and Refugees, the NH Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Manchester, the NH Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health, and the AFSC. Following a public hearing, the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee voted 17 to 1 to recommend its defeat.

Similar coalitions of groups, sometimes joined by lobbyists for employers, testified against other bills.

SB 353, sponsored by Sen. Joe Kenney, which would have required local police to enforce federal immigration laws, was defeated. HB 1137, which would have made contracts with illegal aliens unenforceable, was likewise defeated on a voice vote, without debate. A second non-binding resolution urging the federal government to enforce all immigration laws went down to defeat April 16 in the House by a 204 to 94 vote.



Eva Castillo at May 1 Rally

Quaker Witness is a publication of the New Hampshire Office of the American Friends Service Committee. In its work for social justice and peace, the AFSC expresses a Quaker belief in the dignity and promise of every person and a faith in the power of love and nonviolence to bring about change. Arnie Alpert is AFSC's NH Program Coordinator. Maggie Fogarty coordinates the NH Economic Justice Project. Emina Zlotrg is the Youth Organizer. Erin Placey is Peace-Building Associate. Contributions to AFSC are deductible for federal income tax purposes.

Where are the Youth in the Anti-Nuclear Movement?

by Erin Placey

Think Outside the Bomb is a network of young—yes you read that correctly YOUNG—activists working for nuclear weapons nonproliferation and disarmament, and also against the renaissance of nuclear energy. Each summer since 2005, over 100 activists between the ages of 18 and 29 have gathered in California to learn about nuclear issues and develop strategies to change our current nuclear reality.

This year, in an attempt to engage youth in a different geographic area, the conference is moving to New England. The 2008 National Think Outside the Bomb Conference will be at MIT in Cambridge from August 14–17. The AFSC's New Hampshire and Cambridge offices have played a significant

THINK OUTSIDE THE BOMB

role in facilitating logistics and developing the program schedule.

Many youth feel that nuclear weapons are an abstract issue that has no bearing on their own lives. That's why the conference begins with the theme: "Where do I fit into the nuclear weapons complex?" and an examination of the intricate ties of the nuclear weapons complex to their own communities, universities, and hometowns. Other themes will include "Environmental Racism & Indigenous Communities," "Taking Back our Coasts: Nuclear Power Resistance," and "Making it Real: How do we live lives of Resistance and Creativity?" A picnic at Hampton Beach with Clamshell Alliance members is being planned.

Invited speakers include: Arjun Makhijani author of *Carbon-Free and Nuclear-Free: A Roadmap for U.S. Energy Policy*; Zia Mian Nuclear Physicist and Princeton professor; members of Iraq Veterans Against the War; and also people from communities in the Marshall Atolls, Nevada testing sites, and Uranium mines.

Working to fuse traditional conference styles with a vibrant youth culture highly sensitive to the reality that nuclear weapons and humans cannot coexist, and with an urgency reinforced by the instability of the current geopolitical world, TOTB offers young activists a place for rejuvenation and inspiration. Conference applications will be available mid-June.

For more information, join the Think Outside the Bomb group on Facebook, email Erin Placey at eplacey@afsc.org or check out www.thinkoutsidethebomb.org.

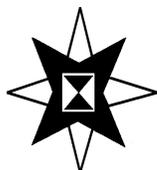


Erin Placey and Holly Clayman outside John McCain's campaign event in Nashua, June 12.

Quaker Witness

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