

future generations. Monsignor Sampson's influence on our children and on so many others throughout the world should be remembered, as it will be missed.

SPRINT'S FIRING OF 235
EMPLOYEES IN SAN FRANCISCO

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 29, 1996

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, on July 14, 1994, the Sprint Corp. abruptly closed down La Conexion Familiar, its San Francisco telemarketing subsidiary, and fired all 235 La Conexion Familiar workers. These employees were let go just 1 week before they were scheduled to vote in an organizing election under the supervision of the National Labor Relations Board. A majority of the employees at La Conexion Familiar had signed a petition indicating their desire to unionize. The employees said that they were seeking to improve working conditions which included restrictions on drinking water and bathroom breaks.

The National Labor Relations Board charged Sprint with over 50 Federal labor violations and with illegally closing La Conexion Familiar. An administrative law judge upheld these 50 labor violations, but offered no assistance or remedy to the fired employees. The NLRB general counsel has appealed to the full Board charging that the closing was an illegal effort to thwart a union organizing drive.

The U.S. Department of Labor held a public forum in San Francisco this week, entitled "Public Forum of the Effects of a Sudden Plant Closure and the Impact on the Principle of Freedom of Association and the Right of Workers to Organize." This forum was the first of its kind under the terms of the NAFTA agreement. I submitted testimony to this forum and would like to share my testimony with my colleagues. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I respectfully request that my testimony be entered into the RECORD.

EFFECTS OF SUDDEN PLANT CLOSURE AND THE
IMPACT ON THE PRINCIPLE OF FREEDOM OF
ASSOCIATION AND THE RIGHT OF WORKERS TO
ORGANIZE

(By Tom Lantos)

I would first like to commend you for holding this hearing which is the first of its kind under the terms of the NAFTA agreement on a case involving violations of worker rights in the United States. As you know, I was strongly opposed to NAFTA, but it is now the law of the land and we must live by its provisions. I will be the first to make sure that the spirit and intent of the principles contained in NAFTA's side agreement on labor cooperation are given maximum attention in the enforcement of NAFTA's provisions.

The North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation states plainly that every effort will be made to guarantee to all workers the right of freedom of association and the right to union representation.

The Sprint workers who are the subject of today's hearing were clearly denied these rights. Sprint's shutdown of La Conexion Familiar demonstrated that reality falls well short of the goals of the NAFTA agreement on labor cooperation. This is a case of a company which willfully violated our labor law and which was cited with more than 50 viola-

tions. It is also a case of human pain and suffering.

As you know, on July 14, 1994, 235 individuals were thrown out of work by Sprint. Many of these workers live in my Congressional district. Today we heard from several of these workers who have told us in their own words the turmoil they have had to endure.

I have heard their pain from the beginning of this tragic situation and I have observed first hand the wrenching consequences of Sprint's behavior of these worker's lives. In a split second these workers were unemployed. Their families were in disarray. And the promise of the American dream was destroyed. "How could this happen", they asked, "After all, this is America, where laws are supposed to mean what they say and are supposed to be enforced to the letter."

When Sprint abruptly shut its "La Conexion Familiar" facility one week before an organizing election, we had a classic case of US labor law not adequately protecting American workers. Two hundred and thirty-five workers lost their jobs, victims of an illegal campaign against workers' rights. More than a year and a half after losing their jobs, the workers at La Conexion Familiar are still struggling and awaiting justice. Out of the 177 workers who were scheduled to vote in the union election, fewer than half are working—the rest are still out of work.

The National Labor Relations Board moved as quickly as current law permitted. But in spite of their efforts it took over four months until the case was heard and well over a year until a decision was issued. And the process is far from over. As of today, this case is 593 days old and it will take many more months before the Board issues a final decision, even as they expedite the case. It will take years before all parties exhaust available appeals. In the meantime, the workers are the ones paying the price for the inability of our system to provide prompt and effective remedies for this obvious and egregious violation of the law.

The Sprint case is not atypical. The latest data available from the NLRB show that by the end of 1994, the median number of days it took for an unfair labor practice case to reach a decision by an administrative law judge was 360 days and the median number of days to reach a Board decision was 601 days. What this means is that half of all these cases took even longer. The average age of cases pending before the Board (as of September 30, 1994) was 758 days. Add to that years of appeals through the courts and we have to recognize that our current system of labor law is in fact an easy and inexpensive tool for companies to use to break the law rather than abide by it.

It is simply unjust for workers who have lost their jobs as a result of unfair labor practices by their employers to have to wait so long for a remedy. Our labor laws and their enforcement mechanisms must be strengthened.

Under these circumstances, I admire the courage of the workers at La Conexion Familiar. They stepped up to the plate and took a swing at their rights. What they did not know was that the game was rigged against them and Sprint was throwing a spit ball. What would you do if you were a worker in a plant or a facility such as La Conexion Familiar and you were told by your supervisor or your manager:

"Look, don't even try to organize, because we'll shut the plant down and it will take you four to five years to prove that the company did anything wrong. In the meantime, you will be out of work."

Under these circumstances would anyone try to organize? There is no question that the average worker would say, "No."

This is what is so admirable about the Sprint workers at La Conexion Familiar. In spite of all the threats, the coercion and the spying, they still tried. They demonstrated that the importance of organizing a union is not from a bygone era, but that organizing a union is more relevant than ever. It is our system of labor law and its enforcement which must be brought into the 21st century.

This is why I am testifying today in support of Sprint workers and all workers who want to organize. I will continue to do everything I can to seek a remedy in this case and will continue to push for labor law reform which provides prompt and effective penalties against labor law violators. Workers must feel secure in their belief that they can exercise their right to organize without fear of retaliation by their employer and without running the risk of losing their job.

One reason I opposed the NAFTA agreement was that it perpetuated the ineffectiveness of US law in protecting workers rights. In the case of the right to organize, the NAFTA agreement provides only a mechanism for exposing violations of these rights and this Forum is part of that mechanism. It is important for workers to demonstrate the widespread abuse of workers rights. But it is clearly not enough.

The objectives of the NAFTA side agreement on labor cooperation are admirable. But the law itself should contain penalties against the companies who benefit from expanded trade opportunities but at the same time violate their workers' rights, whether in Mexico, Canada or the United States. I will fight hard to ensure that the NAFTA agreement is amended to include real penalties and appropriate enforcement provisions.

I support calls for an international code of conduct for all companies operating on a global scale. This code will ensure that workers' rights, which we in the United States are at least committed to on paper and which are contained in the NAFTA side agreement on labor cooperation, will become a part and parcel of acceptable behavior in international commerce.

The promise of international investment and trade must go hand in hand with the promise of improved working conditions and living standards for workers both in the United States and abroad. By recognizing and protecting the rights of workers to form unions and engage in collective bargaining, we are not giving workers entitlements or handouts. We are giving them the tools to stand up for themselves and claim their fair share of economic progress that they had a hand in producing.

Thank you.

ST. DAVID'S DAY

HON. PAT DANNER

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 29, 1996

Ms. DANNER. Mr. Speaker, for more than 850 years, the legacy of St. David has been an inspiration to generations of people of Welsh descent, including such prominent American leaders as Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Jefferson.

While the annual celebration will be delayed slightly this season by leap year, St. David's Day, March 1, will recognize the legend of the patron of Wales—one of the most illustrious bishops of ancient Wales.

In fact, a 10th century manuscript refers to St. David as the spiritual leader of the Welsh.

One of the legends surrounding St. David is that during his schooling, a dove with a golden beak was seen playing by his lips, teaching him to sing the glory of God.

At the time of his death, just before angels carried his soul to heaven, St. David is reported to have said: "Be joyful brothers and sisters. Keep your faith and do the little things you have seen and heard with me."

For the many Welsh-Americans who will be celebrating tomorrow, I trust that the day will bring you the joy St. David spoke of so many years ago.

TRIBUTE TO LETICIA P. JOHNSON

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 29, 1996

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, there is no greater calling than attending to the education and nurturing of our children. For the past 22 years Leticia P. Johnson has been performing that very vital task. Leticia is a graduate of Brooklyn College and received a master's degree in supervision and administration.

Leticia believes that early childhood learning sets the stage for positive human development. Leticia has dedicated herself to getting society and educators to focus on the total needs of our children.

Leticia's participation in various organizations reflects her commitment to children. She is a member of the National Black Child Development Institute, and is the cochair of the Early Childhood Task Force. Leticia is also a member of the Bedford-Stuyvesant Community Conference Inc. For the past 10 years she has served as the director of Young Minds Day Care Center, sponsored by Fort Greene Citizens Council Inc. Brooklyn sees the fruits of Leticia's efforts each time a child is nurtured and educated in her institution. I am happy to acknowledge her selfless efforts.

HANSON POLICE CHIEF HAILS 1994 CRIME BILL

HON. BARNEY FRANK

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 29, 1996

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I ask permission to insert into the RECORD a very powerful letter which I received from Chief Eugene Berry of the police department of the town of Hanson. Chief Berry writes to express his strong support for the 1994 crime bill and the funds that have gone to local communities as the result of this. His letter reinforces the point that it would be great folly for this Congress to disrupt this flow of funds by making drastic changes in this program. Chief Berry notes that his department and the entire State of Massachusetts have benefited from these funds, and as a police chief who is dealing every day with the problem of protecting the public safety in a small community, Chief Berry speaks with great credibility on this subject.

As a police chief, and as an instructor for the Massachusetts Criminal Justice Training Council, Chief Berry is very well situated to

evaluate this program and his strong testimony in support of it should carry a great deal of weight. I ask that Chief Berry's letter be printed here.

POLICE DEPARTMENT,
TOWN OF HANSON,
Hanson, MA, January 31, 1996.

Hon. BARNEY FRANK,
State House, Boston, MA.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE FRANK: I am writing to you to share the success of the 1994 federal Crime Bill, specifically the COPS FAST and COPS MORE projects.

The Town of Hanson Police Department counts itself extremely fortunate to be the recipients of both of these grants.

The COPS FAST grant has truly allowed this department to address the community concerns.

The COPS MORE grant will enable this department to install in-cruiser computers which will add the equivalent of 2.8 police officers to the complement of this department.

The 1994 federal Crime Bill has reinvigorated the dedication of law enforcement in America through these programs.

As an instructor for the Massachusetts Criminal Justice Training Council teaching many of the officers hired as a result of the COPS FAST program, I can attest to the re-dedication of the police service in preparing our recruits for practicing the community policing philosophy.

If the political leaders of our nation are going to play politics with the Community Policing programs in the 1994 federal Crime Bill, it will have a devastating effect on all the positive strides we have made in the last 2 years.

I know you will take an active role in the leadership fighting to retain the advances in policing we have made since 1994.

Sincerely,

E.G. BERRY,
Chief of Police.

IN HONOR OF FATHER JOHN J. MURPHY

HON. GERALD B.H. SOLOMON

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 29, 1996

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take time today to pay tribute to a great man and community leader, Father John J. Murphy of Catskill, NY, in my congressional district. Father Murphy will be celebrating his 25th anniversary as pastor of the St. Patrick's parish located in Catskill, nestled between the Catskill mountains and the Hudson River.

Throughout his tenure as pastor, Father Murphy has served the Catskill community with an unending devotion, self-sacrifice, and countless hours of hard work and determination. Moreover, he has devoted a great deal of his time to ensuring that families in Greene and Columbia Counties have the opportunity to provide their children with a parochial school education in their own community. While attending St. Patrick's for school, it wouldn't be rare to see Father Murphy out front in all kinds of weather, even those Northeast winters, welcoming students off the school bus. Father Murphy takes great pride in playing a central role in the students religious education from their very first day, to graduation day and beyond. Former students spanning his 25 years of service still know they can expect a warm greeting, sound advice and guidance, or just an open ear upon their return.

Mr. Speaker, even outside his formal duties to his parish and the school, it is not unusual to see Father Murphy at all kinds of community events. I always have admired people like Father Murphy who go out of their way to offer their services to neighbors in the community, especially to those people who may not have the privilege of hearing his words of wisdom regularly. It is actions like these, Mr. Speaker, that make Father John Murphy a pillar of the Catskill community.

This year, Father Murphy will have been a priest for 39 years, 25 of which will have been as pastor of St. Patrick's. And on this Sunday, March 3, 1996, the Catskill community will pay tribute to his tremendous service on their behalf. At this time, I ask you, Mr. Speaker, and the rest of my colleagues in the House to rise alongside myself and the rest of his community in wishing Father Murphy many more years of health and happiness.

HIGHWAY RAIL GRADE CROSSING SAFETY FORMULA ENHANCEMENT ACT OF 1996

HON. PETER J. VISCLOSKY

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 29, 1996

Mr. VISCLOSKY. Mr. Speaker, because I am concerned about the number of railroad crossing accidents in northwest Indiana, today I am introducing legislation that will provide a more effective method of targeting available Federal funds to enhance safety at our most dangerous highway rail grade crossings. I am introducing this legislation with our colleague, Mr. Hostettler, and the entire Indiana congressional delegation, in a bipartisan effort to improve rail safety. This bill, the Highway Rail Grade Crossing Safety Formula Enhancement Act of 1996, which is the companion bill to legislation introduced in the Senate by Indiana's Senators, RICHARD LUGAR and DAN COATS, is similar to legislation I introduced in the 103d Congress (H.R. 4855). This bill would improve the Federal funding formula to account for risk factors that identify which States have significant grade crossing safety problems. The factors considered in the bill include a State's share of the national total for public highway-rail grade crossings, its number of crossings with passive warning devices, and its total number of accidents and fatalities caused by vehicle-train collisions at crossings.

Under the proposed funding formula established by my bill, Indiana's share of rail crossing safety construction funds would increase by an estimated 33 percent annually, from \$4.9 million to \$6.6 million. In 1994, Indiana ranked sixth in the Nation for number of grade crossings—6,788—third for grade crossing accidents—263—and fifth for fatalities, 27. For the current fiscal year, Indiana received 3.4 percent of section 130 safety construction funding, while accounting for 6.1 percent of the Nation's accidents, 5.9 percent of fatalities, and 4 percent of crossings.

Currently, in the United States, several hundred people are killed and thousands more injured every year as a result of vehicle-train collisions at highway rail grade crossings. A significant number of these accidents occur in rail-intensive States, such as Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, California, and Texas. One quarter of