

Nurses, Health Care Workers Build New Union

By JESSICA ORDONA
AK Correspondent

Editor's note: This is the first of a series of two articles based off an interview with Fran Spector, CUHP. Part I.

Health care professionals, like most workers, are rapidly recognizing the basic need to organize into unions.

In San Francisco, Registered Nurses (RN's), Licensed Vocational Nurses (LVN's), Nurses Aids and other health care professionals who want a voice in the practice and policies that affect their work, are building the California Union of Health Care Professionals, (CUHP) Local 723. On Dec. 6, 1979, they were chartered under the Service Employees International Union (SEIU).

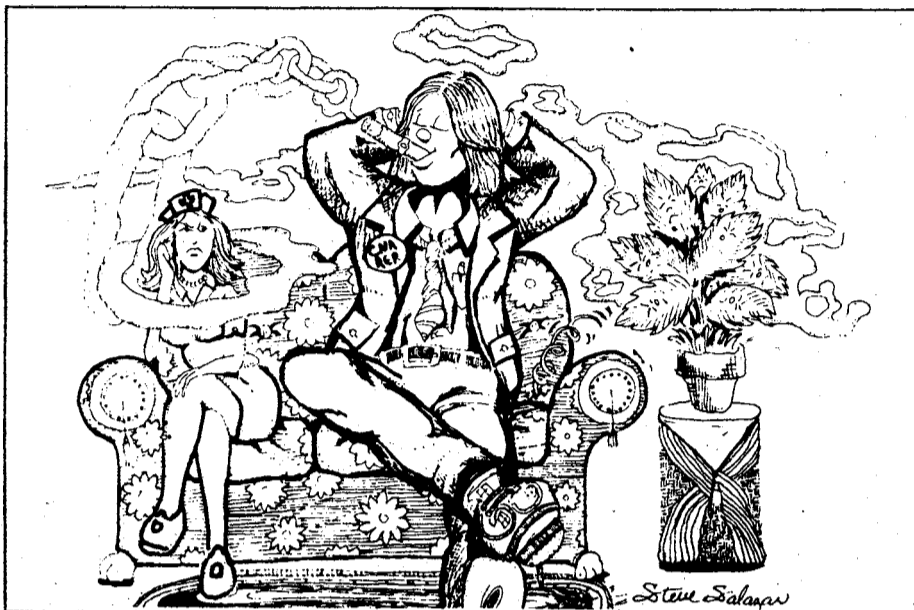
The CUHP has departed from the long-established California Nurses Association (CNA). CUHP arose as a result of a conscious move on the part of former CNA members to break from the CNA.

Last February, this action sparked retaliation from the CNA Board of Directors who expelled seven and suspended four of the people who founded the CUHP. In spite of this heavy blow, the CUHP has managed to stand up and hold its ground.

DEMOCRATIC UNION A MUST

Fran Spector, RN, one of the founding members spoke candidly about her knowledge of CNA and what CUHP proposes to offer. "The first thing we say to nurses who ask us how Local 723 is different from CNA, is that there will be a democratic structure that will be run by members, and that is the basic bottom line," Spector remarked.

In CNA, a void exists between the members and the paid professional labor staff of the association. "This 'elite'



group," continued Spector, "has virtually unhindered decision-making power over collective bargaining in the association. There is no procedure for re-call of staff. The membership body that is supposed to have policy-making power over the program meets infrequently. There is little opportunity to understand what is going on."

In contrast, CUHP proposes a democratic structure where the union will be run by a Board that will be elected directly by the membership. Also, the CUHP will take up relevant and pressing issues that face all professionals concerned with quality health care.

ADEQUATE STAFFING KEY ISSUE

Spector related that those who are forming this union are committed to a new kind of health care delivery system. Health care service in the hospitals should address the question of adequate staffing and proper patient care.

"We at CUHP feel that the fee for the service system, a system whereby

administrators determine staffing patterns rather than the nurses who deliver the care, is problematic. It takes the decision making about the conduct of the unit, the amount of staffing of the unit out of the hands of the people who give that care. It takes the incentive away from giving good quality care and puts the incentive in high technology, wasteful kinds of medical practices. These factors conspire to create a health care system that does not make people well."

"The problem of patient overload is really a staffing problem which follows the management practice of tightening costs by staff reduction and use of temporary help when necessary."

CUHP: NURSES SHOULD HAVE A VOICE

The CUHP would like to develop a plan whereby the nurses on the units have a say in what the staffing patterns should be. "Right now, an 'acuity' system is used which is supposed to be based on how sick the patients are, not only by the

number of sick patients. The problem is that the acuity system is simplistic and doesn't take into account all the different variables present in a situation. No system can really take the place of a human being's judgement. Nurses are trained to make judgements all the time. Why can't nurses determine what their needs are in staffing?

"Often temporary help is used in hospitals. This is very much abused. Many times instead of hiring permanent staff, the hospital will depend on the Registry, which in effect is a hospital employment service agency. These agencies contract nurses out to the hospitals. Those nurses don't get benefits. They don't get educational up-grading. They are basically used as bodies."

PROFITS DETERMINE QUALITY OF HEALTH CARE

Health care in the hospital is turning into an industry where profit determines the quality of services, as illustrated in many examples of present patient care. This negative trend is what the CUHP is trying to target.

Health care professionals are confronted with working conditions that result in low quality patient care. High standards in nursing practice are lowered by the patient overload. Nurses have little or no say in setting policies that affect them in their work day-to-day.

CUHP sees the need to unite nurses, LVN's and all workers concerned with quality health care services for people and advance the position of this group to achieve its goals through progressive unionizing.

Local 723 has its office in San Francisco's Sunset district and is open to all interested groups and individuals who want to be organized to make the health care system effective for both patient and worker.

Nurse Addresses Problems in Health Care Services

By PAULETTE VITIN
AK Correspondent

Note: In a past article, (AK Feb. 16-30, 1980) Luisa Blue, co-coordinator of the Preparatory Committee for the 1980 Filipino People's Far West Convention, spoke about the needs and issues confronting the San Francisco Filipino Community.

In this second interview with Ms. Blue, she spoke about her experiences as a nurse and the current problems in hospital health care nursing service. She is currently employed at San Francisco General Hospital in the Respiratory Care Unit.

AK: What are the most pressing issues facing nurses today?

BLUE: The patient-nurse ratio is a major issue among nurses. The wards are always short staffed.

Exactly how severe is the staffing problem?

The nurse-patient ratio is 1 to 2 nurses to 17 patients. But on weekends and evenings, there are usually only two Registered Nurses on hand. If a nurse calls in sick, there is only one nurse left to deal with 34 patients.

Isn't the staffing problem eased by the use of the Registry nursing pools?

The hospital doesn't have the money to pay for Registry nurses all the time. In addition, the working conditions at General are so bad that a lot of Registry nurses refuse to work there.

Are there problems that affect Filipino nurses specifically?

Although it is subtle, I know that Filipino nurses are discriminated against.

For instance, I know one Filipina nurse who wanted to go into critical care nursing. She had worked at General for three years. The Director of Nursing suggested that she go into another ward to build up her skills before going into critical care nursing.

She felt that it was discrimination that they were denying her request for a transfer. Now, she's quitting her job at General.

Another example is the language bias. Some doctors automatically think, "Oh, no! A Filipino nurse!" It's not because they are bad nurses. The nurses sometimes speak with an accent, and the doctors say they have a hard time understanding them. On the other hand, the

doctors also talk so fast sometimes, that even I have a hard time understanding them, and English is my native language.

There is also this notion that nurses are trained better in the United States than in the Philippines. That's crazy! It's just that in the Philippines, there is a different emphasis in training.

Here, nurses have to know about things like heart attacks and cancer. In the Philippines, the emphasis is on communicable diseases. Nursing is nursing wherever you are trained.

Because of this kind of thinking, a lot of Filipino nurses feel that they aren't qualified enough, and that they have to take the abuse they get on the job. They just keep it to themselves.

In your opinion, what is the most effective way for nurses to voice their concerns like these?

Some nurses say, "We are professionals, and we need a professional organization, like the California Nurses Association (CNA) to represent us because they are nurses, and they know what our needs are."

That's untrue! The people who run CNA are all these educators who haven't done patient care in years. They have



Luisa Blue, R.N., 1980 FWC Co-coordinator.

forgotten what it was like to be a staff nurse.

That is our struggle at General. San Francisco General Hospital is represented by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 400.

A lot of nurses feel that because Local 400 represents so many other types of professions like clerical workers, that their needs won't be heard. They feel that being lumped together with other workers is unprofessional.

I say to them, "Is it professional when you're the only one on the floor to deal with 34 patients, and all the nursing office has to say is: 'Do the best you can.' Is that professional?" □

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA REGION

Educating to Organize

Immigrant Rights Conference a Success

SAN FRANCISCO—"Our Conference wants to address the important issue of the attempted exclusion and deportation of Filipino elderly who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI). We have the task of gaining a working knowledge of this key issue and to develop and carry out a campaign to stop this practice."

With these words, Tessie Paredes, active organizer of the Bay Area Task Force for the Defense of Filipino Immigrant Rights (BATF) addressed an audience of some 200 Filipinos, 130 of whom were senior citizens. All of these people were participants in the "Conference on Filipino Immigrant Rights Problems: Educate to Organize," held on Saturday, March 1, at the Mission Cultural Center.

The conference organized speakers and workshops to discuss the current trend of Filipino exclusion, especially of elderlies receiving SSI benefits. Other topics focused on legislation that will affect the rights of aliens to public assistance, and the role of President Carter's Select Commission on Immigration.

"Many senior citizens actively discussed their problems at the workshops," said Nonie Espiritu, conference co-coordinator. "The participants came to the long-awaited conference with many questions to ask and experiences to share."

Tony Fedelino, whose parents in 1978 were one of the earliest to fall victim to the INS scheme expressed optimism and enthusiasm. "The Filipino community is finally starting to organize around the protection of the rights of Filipino immigrants," said Fedelino. "During the time when I was fighting for my parents, I was stuck there alone. I was contacted to help in this fight for the immigrants and to share my experiences with others. I intend to help." (An account of Fedelino's parents will appear in the next issue of the AK.)



S.F. Immigrant Rights Confab: Many senior citizens spoke out against INS harassment.

AK Photo

Pio Orias, member of the Filipino-American Council of San Francisco, said "I came to learn. That's the most important thing here—to educate ourselves. It is only through this conference that we see each other and talk about issues for the welfare of the Filipino community. It's high time that we do something about these issues."

"I think Filipinos need to become involved in issues that affect their rights as immigrants in this country," added Donna Pineda, a young woman who volunteered her time in preparation for the conference. "I would hope that more Filipinos would become aware and come together as a group to fight for our rights."

CONFERENCE OPENED BY BAY AREA TASK FORCE (BATF)

The opening speech by Bay Area Task Force (BATF) co-coordinator Llorette Tamayo and Tessie Paredes explained the growing trend of INS harassment,

and why BATF needed to be established.

ATTACKS ON ELDERLY FILIPINOS

"The Filipino community has been targetted and attacked," explained Paredes. "Now this elderly sector of our community faces immigration harassment. It is shocking because we are talking about the INS going after elderly Filipino immigrants who cannot work, who are denied basic survival benefits, and their fundamental right to be reunited with their families."

Paredes denounced this pattern of harassment which has made Filipino elderly feel like criminals and cheats. "In fact," she continued, "the elderly have a legal right to SSI benefits. The law only requires a 30-day residency. The relatively easy access to these benefits is based on the premise that no human being in America should be forced to starve whether they be citizens or aliens."

To point out that immigrants should

not be intimidated, Tamayo added, "Some say that immigrants should be grateful that they are here. Well, no one should be grateful for being at the bottom rung of the ladder, for living under the fear of deportation!"

The unity of the conference was affirmed by workshop reports given in the plenary session wherein resolutions were passed for future work. The session also established the formal organization of the Bay Area Task Force, its principles of unity, its leadership and organizational structure.

Those who would like to participate in building the Bay Area Task Force, general meetings are currently being held to organize a petition campaign to protest the INS harassment and a letter-writing campaign to counter pending legislation now in Congress that will affect SSI recipients. For more information, contact BATF co-coordinators, Llorette Tamayo at 673-1720 and Nonie Espiritu at 861-4476. □

Economic Crisis the Real Problem

"Build A Strong Organization!"



Tessie Paredes, Filipino Immigrant Services.



Llorette Tamayo, International Institute.

Editor's Note: These are excerpts from speeches delivered by Llorette Tamayo and Tessie Paredes of the Bay Area Task Force at the March 1 conference. The following statements provide a backdrop to the growing trend of INS harassment, and why the Filipino community needs to organize.

Ms. Tamayo is a social worker and Ms. Paredes works at the Filipino Immigrant Services in Oakland.

"At present, the American society is in the midst of a severe economic and political crisis. The American economy again is in a depression. Sky-rocketing inflation and a record-high unemployment are daily realities that confront the

public. Because of these economic and political failures, the present mood of the people is one of desire for change.

In these times of crisis, those in power seek scapegoats to cover up the real causes of the economic and political problems. The minorities and aliens become a convenient scapegoat.

"The economic problems of America are blamed on aliens, rather than on the government, and the profit-making corporations. Through controversies like this, more stories about aliens 'ripping off the welfare system' can be perpetrated to the point where it becomes erroneously accepted by the American public as the truth."

"In fact, a U.S. Government General Accounting Office report in 1978 explicitly blames aliens for the economic

difficulties. The report alleged that \$72 million dollars in welfare is used up by aliens. However, during the Vietnam War one or two B-52 bombers lost in combat amounted to \$72 million! But the government didn't penalize the military for losing the money by cutting their budget.

"Excess billions for military expenditures, foreign aid to dictatorships, billions for the space program instead of billions for health care, welfare, and employment, reflects the true level of government concern for the people."

BUILD A STRONG ORGANIZATION

"Work has to be done to fight issues like this and to build an organization. Only with strong, consistent mobilization and support will the Filipino community be able to stop this serious and devastating practice that cuts benefits to aliens and stops Filipino immigration to the U.S."

"However, the present and the future do not allow us the luxury of taking up issues one at a time. Instead, as times get worse, we will be forced to take on many issues all at one time, on a national scope. We must recognize that immigration policies are not strictly regional but are national policies designed to protect the U.S. economy."

"What is needed is a national plan,

national coordination and a national approach to immigrant problems. Therefore, the National Task Force For the Defense of Filipino Immigrant Rights was born from the Filipino People's Far West Convention in Sacramento last year.

"In January this year, the Bay Area Task Force was formed to take up the work of building the community pressure locally. We cannot only rely on skilled, well-intentioned immigration lawyers. The people themselves are the only viable and trusty weapons that we have at our disposal."

Without organization, we become a dormant community; a community that accepts discrimination as a way of life; a community that says our elderly deserve to be harassed and shocked at the Honolulu airport; a community that says our elderly should be forced to starve in the land of milk and honey."

Some say that the Filipino community can never unify. But unity is possible if we are united on strong principles—the principles of defending rights of immigrants against discrimination.

"Whether we are Tagalogs, Ilocanos, Kapangpangans, Visayans, Bicolanos, Cebuano or Muslims, unity is possible if we can unite above our differences. We Filipinos will stand together because we care about the development of our community." □

SEATTLE REGION

Arbitrary, Dictatorial Moves Criticized

Seattle Community Protests Lawsin's Activities

will not allow Vincent Lawsin's arbitrary actions to continue. We went out into the community and support to protest this abuse of

this call, concerned individuals themselves into the Committee of the Democratic Process in the JDP-FCS).

FCS is composed of members Filipinos for Action and Reform and other community persons angered by Lawsin's recent on the democratic rights of FCS, particularly the removal of committee chairpersons: Ade, Julie Nonog and Mel Fernandez. The Clubhouse Director, Leni these four were recently removed from their posts without notice, despite protests from other members.

UNITY REGISTERS

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Initial protest move, the CUDP launched a petition campaign demanding the reinstatement of the four. In a span of just one week, 250 of the Seattle Filipino community signed the petitions.

Responses to the petition ranged from disgust towards Lawsin's actions, those who earnestly want to hear the controversy. Others were supporters who would not sign because of fear of retaliation against Lawsin and his supporters.

Whether he is doing this on his own, or he is behind all his actions, this is exposed," stated one of the protesters.

The fact sheet which accompanied the petition has also proven to be very useful for the community," said Ema Catangue. "It enumerated Lawsin's moves such as the violation of to freedom of speech."

Questions and comments such as "We don't know how this is happening. Why is he doing this?" or "What kind of a person is Lawsin?" are some of the questions from people who read the fact sheet.

In a recent interview with Lawsin, the community gathered his reactions to the petition. He responded: "I don't see what the petition will do. I won't entertain it. In fact, the petition is out of order!"



LAWSIN BETRAYS REFORM

In the 1978 FCS elections, Lawsin ran against Tangalan under the FAR banner. People who voted for the Reform slate are now questioning his turnabout.

"Lawsin openly supported the reform group (FAR) during his campaign bid for the presidency of FCS. He fully agreed with FAR's platform and promised to implement it and perform his duties for the interest of the Filipino people," Mrs. Ade Domingo stated. "But after the euphoria around the reform victory died down and matters had to be settled, Lawsin began to lose interest in the reform efforts."

Lawsin's betrayal of the Reform Movement did not happen overnight.

The Fil-Am Reformer, newsletter of the FAR has concluded from Lawsin's action that "he took advantage of the reform movement's popularity in 1978 to get elected. He did not have any genuine intention of changing the bankruptcy of the Tangalan administration. He merely abused the community's desire for change, for his own narrow self-interest."

LAWSIN JUSTIFIES ACTIONS

In the summer of 1979, Lawsin left Seattle to attend school in the East Coast. During his absence, Vice President Domingo took over his office. Things started moving then—the improvement of the FCS building went into full swing and a lease to the hall was negotiated under the direction of Mrs. Domingo.

When Lawsin returned after three months, he began criticizing the improve-

ment efforts of the committees. He claimed that he never knew what was happening, and insisted that he has never given sanctions to the developments.

Furthermore, Lawsin's main reason for replacing the chairmanships of the three committees was, in his own words, "I want to give others a chance." When asked why Silvestre Tangalan, who has been president of FCS for eight years, was replacing Mel Fernandez in the Building Improvement Committee, he responded: "Tangalan is an architect. It is beside the point whether he was president for eight years. During that time, he was never in the Building Improvement Committee, he was just president!"

He further explained what he called the "validity" of his reasons for removing the chairpersons. "As president, I have the prerogative to remove people. I can replace someone whether or not that person is doing good."

INTRIGUES FAIL TO STOP PETITION

As the community learned more about Lawsin's undemocratic actions through the petition campaign, intrigues around the practice of Ade Domingo, Mel Fernandez and Julie Nonog started to circulate.

Rumors such as "Mrs. Domingo went home to the Philippines and possibly used the Council's money" were spread around in an attempt to undermine the petition campaign.

"All of these accusations are, of

course, untrue," responded Mrs. Domingo. "I have submitted all the reports before I left and the money was accounted for and reported to the Treasurer by the Chairpersons of the different committees. If Lawsin would like to know all these, he has only to read the various reports and minutes of the Council meetings."

She also added that since the petition campaign started, she has received threatening phone calls. She quoted the calls: "Remember when you will have flat tires in the vicinity of the FCS building" and "You and your family are communists!"

Mrs. Domingo is deeply alarmed not so much by the phone-calls but by the tactics being used to harass her to make her give up her just cause. "To me," she continued, "these calls are down-right cold and cruel. It is the most degrading sort of politics. If we resort to this type of campaign, I can only say that I feel sorry for those people."

THE LINES ARE DRAWN

As the community becomes more involved in this unfolding drama, many people are taking sides and taking a position around the issue.

"We are beginning to know who are our real friends," said Ema Catangue, an active community member. "We can no longer treat each other on a personal or compadre basis. The issue is up. Should we uphold the democratic process in the FCS, or should this suppression and intimidation continue? People will have to take their stand. Which side are you on?"

"The petition campaign has afforded the community the chance to formulate opinions around this controversy. It has proven to be a learning experience for the community as well as FAR members. The rumor-mongering intrigues are meant to sow confusion in the community. More and more people are challenging Lawsin's actions," stated Leni Marin, one of the victims of Lawsin's undemocratic moves.

To all these, Lawsin's only response was: "We should not wash our dirty linen in the community. We should keep this issue within the Council."

People will have to know sooner or later. The next FCS Council meeting is scheduled for March 9 at 1:30 p.m. □

Lawsin's Actions Backfire at Council Meeting

Special to ANG KATIPUNAN

The attempted firing of three FCS committee heads and the clubhouse director exploded in Vincent Lawsin's ears as an angry and tension-filled March 9 Council meeting rebelled against the president's arbitrary actions. The council meeting—which was supposed to confirm Lawsin's replacements of the committees—broke into a demonstration against the firings as over community members, bearing petitions protesting the firings, were denied right to address the Council.

Ignoring motions of other council members present to let the community members speak, Lawsin ruled all such motions as "out of order." And as Council members, along with the community members present, reacted angrily to Lawsin's rulings, the FCS president responded by hastily and arbitrarily adjourning the meeting.

CHAIRPERSONS REFUSE LAWSIN'S FIRINGS

Opposition to Lawsin's firings were first read under the correspondence sec-

tion of the agenda. All the "fired" committee heads, along with the clubhouse director, made it known that they would not recognize Lawsin's actions and that they would continue to function in the positions they held.

Leni Marin's letter stated clearly that there were no provisions in the FCS Constitutions for Lawsin's actions, and that she demanded a trial under Robert's Rules of Order. Lacking that, she threatened legal action to stop Lawsin's moves.

Julie Nonog and Ade Domingo also wrote letters, saying they refused to recognize the validity of Lawsin's actions. They simply said that they would continue to function in their respective committees.

With these challenges to Lawsin's "firings," it was evident that even among those who originally supported Lawsin's actions were having doubts about the president's thinking over these issues. With the community members present, bearing petitions of 500 people protesting Lawsin's actions, motions were made to suspend the agenda and hear the community's grievances.

A majority of the council—20 to 15—voted for the motion. But a two-thirds majority was lacking. Then a motion to suspend the rules was made, this in an effort to let the people present speak, "even if for only three minutes."

PEOPLE ARE OUT OF ORDER

Lawsin ruled all these suggestions as "out of order," and a heated debate ensued. Vilma Fernandez motioned that community members present be allowed to participate.

"I believe that we have always followed a policy that whenever there are concerned members of the community present, they should be allowed to speak upon request," remarked Urbano Quijance who supported Fernandez' motion.

Lawsin, steadfast on his "no community members can participate" stance, continued to ignore both the request and the petitions. In addition, Council member Ben Rafanan strongly supported Lawsin's position by calling all suggestions as "out of order."

To these actions, the angry crowd started chanting, "three minutes only!" and continued to demand their right to

be heard.

Lawsin, frustrated at the turn of events, ignored the crowd's demand by adjourning the meeting.

MEETING AFTERMATH

Several council members stayed with the community members present and held an open discussion with them.

"The FCSI exists for the whole Seattle Filipino community, not just for the council members alone. I believe we cannot deny their right to speak on controversial issues whenever they see it necessary," stated council member Silme Domingo.

Council member Connie Pacis added: "Lawsin disregarded the signed petition—he also denied the people's right to participate, but we will continue to protest his undemocratic actions."

Another member present remarked that while the FCS has had both good and bad presidents in the past, Lawsin was "turning out to be even more undemocratic—and incompetent—than anyone expected." □

New Legislation Legalizes Anti-Alien Attacks

The growing anti-alien sentiments reflected daily in the news media are affecting the highest law making body of America. Hundreds of anti-alien bills that would severely limit alien access to public assistance are now awaiting Congressional approval.

Two bills in particular that are close to becoming law are House Resolution (HR) 4904 and HR 3236. If passed, both would severely restrict Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits to elderly immigrants, a federal assistance program for low-income aged, blind or disabled.

HR 4904 which passed the House of Representatives in November of last year, is currently being debated in the Senate. Its effect on SSI recipients would limit eligibility, requiring that the income of the sponsor be used as the income of the alien applying for benefits.

HR 3236 which has passed both Houses and must now be refined in a joint session of both Houses, will 1) impose a three-year residency requirement before eligibility for SSI, and 2) make the affidavit of support legally binding.

At present, it takes only 30 days residency to acquire SSI benefits. Also, the present affidavit of support is considered only as a commitment to try to support the beneficiary and is not legally

binding.

The immediate effect of such legislation would deny alien access to benefits and services. But the long-range effect would discourage immigration by making it difficult for aliens to survive in America. With public programs becoming increasingly inaccessible in times of economic difficulty, potential sponsors will be reluctant to sponsor more immigrants.

The apparent logic at work is to deprive aliens of services so as to discourage sponsorship; its effect would therefore be the same as exclusion of immigrants in the U.S.

Other legislation (HR 1881, 5112) affecting aliens would make SSI reciprocity a deportable violation. Any elderly alien who applied for SSI (and possibly other forms of public assistance) would thus be liable for deportation.

But alien access to public services is not the only legislative attack on aliens currently pending in Congress. The general anti-alien sentiments is reflected also in an all-sided attack on alien rights.

HR 5414 will deny aliens the right to vote in union elections. In addition, a whole group of bills which propose to make alien participation in political demonstrations a deportable offense were introduced in the last few months. This



particular bill was a reaction to militant opposition by Iranians to U.S. policies in Iran.

One bill affecting legal services to "illegals" has been enacted and is now Public Law. This law originally intended specifically for aliens from Mexico, would affect all undocumented workers. With the recent denial of Deported Voluntary Departure (DVD) status for H-1 nurses, many nurses who become undocumented when their work visas ex-

pires would not be eligible for the services from federally-funded legal aid projects.

The present Congress is in its second session and will continue until December 30, 1980. While most of the above-mentioned bills have not yet been enacted, they are still being deliberated and as such, still have the potential to become law. Given the current anti-alien trend, it is likely that these bills will be given the stamp of approval by Congress. □

PSSSSST...

Filipino CPAs Fight Discrimination

By VINCE REYES
AK Correspondent

Have you heard that another intensive battle against racial and national discrimination is brewing? This time, Uncle Sam's anti-alien whip is striking Filipino CPA's in the U.S.

This coming March 24, the California State Supreme Court will begin hearings to decide whether or not Filipinos will be able to qualify for Certified Public Accountant (CPA) status. Currently, CPA status for foreign accountants is limited only to those who can pass the Board examination sponsored by the California Board of Accountancy. Under current law, the only immigrants who do not have to take the test are those from British Commonwealth countries such as England and the vast majority of these accountants are white.

DISCRIMINATION—TOOL TO GENERATE CHEAP LABOR

Filipino accountants, like their counterparts here in the U.S., were trained using American standards of accounting even to the point of using the same text books. However, upon arrival in the U.S., many Filipino accountants are not able to secure employment in their field despite the fact that there is a growing

need for accountants in the country. This is because Filipinos, if they wish to practice, must take the Board examination. To prepare for this, they must either return to school or take extra time to study for the exams. It is estimated that 90 percent of all Filipino accountants are not practicing CPA's.

In the meantime, many work as bookkeepers or clerks staying close to the finance field. Obviously, the finance industry is able to use the skilled accountants in lower profession brackets, thus making Filipinos an "underclass" to their profession—paid less for the same type of work.

THE BATTLE BEGAN... FILIPINOS ORGANIZE

This situation began to change in mid-1978, when Filipino accountants organized themselves and through the Board of Consumer Affairs filed suit against the California Board of Accountancy for discrimination. Finally, after about a year of delay, the Court granted waivers to Filipino immigrant accountants in June of 1979.

In what appeared to be a major victory, the process of distributing waiver forms began. But in September, 1979, only three months after the granting of waivers, the Supreme Court reversed its

decision. In one simple move the right to be granted waivers was taken away and Filipinos once again found themselves having to take the examinations.

This situation outraged Filipinos up and down the state, and two organizations have come together for the purpose of fighting for the right to become CPA's. The Filipino Accountants Association was formed in Northern California and the Filipino-American Accountants of Southern California is headquartered in Los Angeles.

BIG BUSINESS BEHIND DISCRIMINATION

Cornelio Afan, one of the spokespersons for the Southern California group explained that the reversal was due largely to the actions of the California Society of Certified Public Accountants (CSCPA). The CSCPA registered a complaint to the California Supreme Court arguing that if Filipinos were given the right to waivers, it would "lower the standard" of the accounting profession.

To this, Afan stated that "the CSCPA could not give evidence to support this claim and in fact the Board of Accountancy had earlier passed a resolution saying the Philippines is as professional as California in their standards for the profession. Thus, there is no basis for the reversal of the decision."

Closer examination of the CSCPA's reveals that most of its officers and directors belong to what is known as the "Big 8" in the accounting field. The Big 8 is composed of "prestigious" firms such as Price-Waterhouse and the Arthur Young Corporation.

The Filipino American Accountants of Southern California are now in the process of preparing to send a delegation to Sacramento for the new hearings. Afan stated that "our lawyer is optimistic considering we have proof of discrimination." However, he also warned that if they win an appeal, the case has the potential of going all the way to the Supreme Court of the United States.

Afan also asserted that the California Society of CPA's is going to undergo more criticism from the Filipino accountant because "trying to monopolize the profession is only for their (CSCPA) own

benefit. We have issued a complaint to the Federal Trade Commission for monopoly practices against the Big 8 firms."

ANTI-ALIEN HYSTERIA— SCAPEGOAT FOR ECONOMIC HARDSHIPS

Since the beginning of their organizing efforts the accountants have had fairly positive results from the community. Afan requested "that the Filipino community support our fight because if we win it—it will have a chain reaction on the other professions who are affected by licensure problems such as doctors and medical technicians. This is also true of the case of H-1 nurses and others."

It is apparent that the current wave of anti-alien feelings is widespread and not only limited and directed towards non-English speakers or those who are unskilled laborers. The case of the Filipino accountants proves that even educated and skilled professional immigrants are under attack of their basic right to practice their profession.

The CSCPA adds further fuel to fire by scapegoating Filipinos as a cause of lowering the standards of the profession. It can also be interpreted from this that Filipinos are taking away jobs from Americans at the lower levels of the finance industry. It is bad enough when the anti-alien hysteria gets drummed up towards unskilled workers. Today, however, it even extends itself to skilled immigrants as well.

THE COMMUNITY SHOULD UNITE AND FIGHT RACISM

The Filipino community has had its share of the new trend of racism in the U.S. Our particular experiences around the case of the two nurses, Narciso and Perez, and Dr. Alona's trial taught us that organization of groups such as the NAFL and the recent formation of the National Task Force for the Defense of Immigrant Rights is very necessary. It is clear that the struggle of Filipino accountants to gain their right to practice their profession will add to the trend of resistance against racial and national discrimination, and should be supported by the community. □

