

I have seen recent testimony by Amy Dean, Executive Officer of the South Bay AFL-CIO Labor Council given at one of the Labor Department's ergonomic standard hearings. I believe this testimony illustrates the real life consequences of not protecting workers in this nation from ergonomic hazards and so I include it in the Congressional Record for the information of my colleagues.

TESTIMONY OF AMY B. DEAN, EXECUTIVE OFFICER SOUTH BAY AFL-CIO LABOR COUNCIL, JULY 24, 2001

My name is Amy Beth Dean and I am the Executive Officer of the South Bay AFL-CIO Labor Council. The Labor Council represents more than 100,000 working families throughout Silicon Valley.

In this community, there are union members in every occupation. We work in manufacturing. We work in construction. We work in health care. We look after young children. We're even the people who keep this building clean.

But far more important than any of those differences in the work we do, are the values we all share—values that begin with the belief that each of us has the right to a safe and healthy workplace. That's why I'm here today.

A number of years ago a British journalist once wrote that, "in politics, being ridiculous is more damaging than being extreme." By destroying OSHA's ergonomics standard—and then stacking these forums in favor of big business—the Bush Administration has demonstrated itself to be both. And American workers are paying for George Bush's extremism every single day.

Since George Bush and the Republicans in Congress killed this safety standard, more than 500,000 workers have suffered carpal tunnel syndrome and other injuries. That's one more worker every 18 seconds.

What kinds of workers are we talking about? Some of them are people who work in poultry processing plants. Some work with heavy equipment. Others work in places like nursing homes and warehouses. But many of these women and men work in high technology. They're clerical and technical workers. And many are professionals.

They're people like Patricia Clay. She works at the Referral Center at the Valley Medical Center. She worked for five years at a desk that was too high. She raised the issue with her supervisor, but her employer was indifferent. Eventually, she began noticing that something was wrong with her right hand. She found out it was carpal tunnel syndrome. Eventually, she lost so much strength that, after a while, she couldn't hold anything over two pounds. That meant she couldn't even pick up the baby grandson she was helping her daughter to look after. A week ago, Patricia Clark had surgery, but her doctor tells her she'll never be the same that she was before.

We know from experience that, with the right equipment and practices, injuries like those suffered by Patricia can be avoided. Just ask anyone who was on the staff at the San Jose Mercury News back in the mid-90s. As a result of using outdated computer keyboards and poorly designed workstations, there were 70 repetitive stress injuries reported back in 1993.

I'm not talking about workers suffering an ache every now and then, but sometimes excruciating pain. I'm talking about the kind of pain that keeps you from leading a normal life. Well, those workers at the Mercury News were lucky. At that time, thanks to the effort of the San Jose Newspaper Guild—

and the cooperation of the Mercury News—changes were made. The paper began investing in the kind of equipment computer users need. And guess what? By 1998 repetitive strain injuries declined by 49%!

But, the fact is, not every worker has an employer who wants to do the right thing. The fact is that far too many employers still believe they don't have an obligation to provide safe and healthy working conditions. Employers who would rather see workers wear wrist splints or undergo physical therapy, or even suffer through surgery than invest in computer keyboards that are safe to use.

It's the women and men working for those kinds of employers who need this ergonomic standard most of all. And those are the very people George Bush chose to betray.

I know that three questions are being asked of those participating in these forums. You've asked what is an ergonomics injury. You've asked how OSHA can determine whether an ergonomics injury was caused by work.

And you've asked what the most useful and cost effective government measures are to address ergonomic injuries. It seems to me that if the Department of Labor reviewed the 10 years of research and expert testimony it compiled to draft the ergonomics standard it could find the answer to those and many other questions.

Instead, I have a fourth question I would like to ask this Administration. When a young newspaper reporter's hands are numb after hours of typing at an obsolete keyboard, who is going to help her to drive her car?

When a baby cries out in the middle of the night and the pain in her mother's arms and hands is so severe from working at an obsolete keyboard that she can't reach down to lift that child from her crib and that young mother is left standing there with her heart breaking, who will be there to comfort her baby?

Will it be the company she works for? Will it be Secretary Chao? Or will it be George W. Bush?

I have no further comments.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. THOMAS G. TANCREDO

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 27, 2001

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall vote 227 which occurred yesterday, July 26, I was present on the floor and I voted "aye" in support of H. Res. 209.

Unfortunately, the House voting machine did not record my vote.

TREASURY AND GENERAL GOVERNMENT APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2002

SPEECH OF

HON. MAXINE WATERS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday July 25, 2001

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under

consideration the bill (H.R. 2590) making appropriations for the Treasury Department, the United States Postal Service, the Executive Office of the President, and certain Independent Agencies, for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2002, and for other purposes:

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to support the amendment sponsored by Representative KUCINICH which would create a commission to oppose the privatization of Social Security.

Individuals may question why we would create a commission whose outcome is already known. Well, I would pose that question to the President.

On May second, when the White House Commission on Social Security was announced, the President said that when reforms are made, benefits must be maintained at their current level, payroll taxes cannot be raised, reforms must restore Social Security to "sound financial footing," and young workers must be allowed to invest part of their earnings in private accounts. So we knew what the Commission was going to recommend privatization.

But if we do privatize there is no way that we can satisfy the other requirements of President Bush. Privatizing will result in reduction of benefits and it will surely wreck the financial stability of the program.

First, advocates of privatization suggest diverting part of the payroll tax, which funds Social Security, into the private accounts. However, by doing this we actually put the program in greater jeopardy. Studies have shown that by diverting just 2 percent of the payroll tax to private accounts, we bring the solvency rate closer. The President's very plan to restore stability to the program actually bankrupts Social Security sooner than if we do nothing at all.

In addition, privatization does not guarantee financial security. As an Economic Policy Institute study shows, "a bursting of the stock market bubble has meant the largest absolute decline in household wealth since World War II, even after adjusting for inflation. In relative terms, the market's drop represents the sharpest decline in household wealth in 25 years." So it is very possible that this kind of market volatility could happen throughout a worker's lifetime, jeopardizing his or her retirement savings.

From the end of 1999 to the end of 2000, the total financial assets of American households declined 5% or \$1.7 trillion. Therefore, the money some were planning on retiring with is not there any longer. Those who wanted to retire have to stretch their savings even further or continue working. That is a scary and unfair proposition for our seniors.

But what really concerns me is the idea of individuals putting their money in the stock market without sound financial advice. Many working families do not have the time or the extra money to hire financial advisors to make recommendations on where to put their money. The President's plan, indirectly, favors wealthy individuals and families because they are the only ones who have disposable income to invest, hire professionals and the time to meet with them.

Social Security is the most successful social policy to keep individuals out of poverty in the history of the United States. To privatize Social Security, especially without any type of