

...A man of integrity

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Marr's direction, worked hard for legislative reapportionment based on the one-person, one vote principle.

JIM MARR strongly advocated progressive taxation based on ability to pay, and opposed efforts to institute a sales tax. He believed that a sales tax falls heaviest on working people because they must spend virtually all their income on the necessities of life for their families.

The team of Marr, Brown and McDonald, ably assisted by Tom Scanlon, the appointed director of research and education, who also was a lobbyist and the federation's publicist, made the AFL-CIO a major presence at the Legislature. They also worked to increase the affiliated membership in the federation—which reached 100,000 while Marr was at the helm. This increase bolstered labor's influence in elections.

A HIGH POINT in Oregon labor's political activity history came in the 1950s, Marr recalled in an interview with the Labor Press. Those were the years that saw labor-supported Democrats elected to state and federal offices. Among them were Richard Neuberger, elected to the U.S. Senate; Al Ullman, Edith Green and Charles Porter elected to the U.S. House of Representatives; Robert Holmes as governor; Robert Thornton as attorney general; and Norman Nilsen as state labor commissioner. The decade of the '50s also was highlighted by the re-election of U.S. Senator Wayne Morse as a Democrat — earlier he was a Republican and then an Independent.

THE YEAR 1956 saw labor's efforts bring about a Democratic majority in the Oregon House of Representatives. A Democratic majority in the Oregon State Senate came later

Being a fighter for labor's causes did not deter Marr from seeking harmony in labor-management relations, which resulted in national publicity in helping attract new companies to the Beaver State.

A MAJOR DISAPPOINTMENT for Marr was the failure to get a federally-financed high dam built in the Hells Canyon stretch of the Snake River. Marr had been persuaded to serve as president of the Hells Canyon Association by representatives of the Grange, the Farmers Union, public utility districts and rural electrification groups. In an interview with the Labor Press, Marr noted that instead of a high dam, three smaller structures were authorized by the federal government and built by the Idaho Power Co.

A plain-spoken man with a straight-forward manner, Marr developed a reputation for honesty and integrity. In the early 1960s, William A. Callahan, a longtime member of the Oregon Workers' Compensation Board and a former leader of Portland Roofers Local 49, pulled me aside for a cup of coffee at a counter in a Salem hotel where we were both attending a meeting. Callahan wanted me to know that Jim Marr was a man of great integrity. I had come to the same conclusion based on my brief contacts with Jim in my early days at the Labor Press. I also considered Callahan a man of great integrity.

GEORGE MEANY, president of the national AFL-CIO, had this to say when Marr retired: "Jim Marr served the labor movement faithfully and well. As a result of his efforts, thousands and thousands of his fellow workers enjoy a better and more secure life."

Jim's wife, Helen Marr, served as a business agent and president of Portland Waitresses Local 305, which is now part of UNITE HERE Local 9.

JAMES T. MARR died of a heart ailment in May 1985 at the age of 85.



DEEP IN THOUGHT are James T. Marr (left), executive secretary-treasurer of the Oregon AFL-CIO, and J.D. (Rosy) McDonald, labor federation president, as they sit in the federation's office in the old Portland Labor Temple on SW Fourth Ave. at Jefferson Street in downtown Portland. The photo was taken for the Labor Press in 1965 by Alex Jessen, a free-lance photographer who had worked for the Portland Daily Reporter. Marr was a founder of Municipal Employees Local 483 in 1928, and McDonald was an officer of Meat Cutters Local 143.

Social Security report — The sky is not falling

By **MIKE HALL**

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Ohmigawd ... Look out ... Everybody Run ... The Sky Is Falling!

The media coverage of the latest Social Security trustees' report wasn't quite that hysterical. But you can be sure we're going to hear loud and repeated calls that Social Security is in a huge "CRISIS" from the Bush Administration and other groups with a big stake in privatizing the cornerstone of America's retirement security.

Most media outlets trumpeted how the report's figures show Social Security will pay full benefits through 2040, a year less than last year's report predicted. After that, without any changes whatsoever, it will be able to pay out 74 percent of scheduled benefits. Social Security trustees, three of whom are Bush cabinet members, annually update the status of Social Security.

(The report follows the Bush Administration's move to eliminate traditional pension plans for workers employed by private contractors at the U.S. Department of Energy.)

The loud cries of crisis and extremist talk show banter about grandma and grandpa living in a refrigerator box unless we privatize Social Security and let Wall Street take care of the nation's seniors are likely to grow fol-

lowing the report. But the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities took the kind of deep breath we all should:

"The new trustees' report is consistent with previous reports. It shows that Social Security faces a significant but manageable challenge. While acting sooner rather than later will help reduce the size of the eventual adjustments, the trustees' report indicates that Social Security does not face a deep structural crisis requiring drastic changes."

The panic mongers always point to the huge impact of the Social Security shortfall (estimated at \$4.6 trillion over the next 75 years) on the deficit. Center Executive Director Robert Greenstein points out there is an even larger threat — President Bush's tax cuts:

"The trustees' report places the size of the Social Security shortfall at \$4.6 trillion over the next 75 years, a little more than one-third the cost of the tax cuts over the same period. The cost of the tax cuts just for the top 1 percent of Americans — people with annual incomes today of more than \$400,000 — itself is about equal to the cost of closing the Social Security shortfall.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) reminds us that when Bush took up residency in the White House, he inherited a \$5.6 trillion budget surplus — and immedi-

ately squandered it:

"Rather than using the Clinton surpluses to strengthen Social Security or Medicare, the President and the Republican Rubber Stamp Congress chose to go into debt by recklessly giving massive tax cuts to the wealthy."

She also says the report's findings that Social Security can pay full benefits through 2040 and 74 percent after that:

"...flatly contradicts Republican efforts to manufacture a 'crisis' in Social Security to justify a privatization plan that is unaffordable, unnecessary, and unwise."

Of course, a manufactured "Social Security crisis" was the battle cry of Bush's failed attempt to privatize Social Security. His so-called solution would have eliminated guaranteed benefits, reduced benefit levels and boosted the retirement age.

The AFL-CIO, the Alliance for Retired Americans and other groups long have pointed out how Social Security is the cornerstone of retirement security and should be strengthened — but not through risky privatization schemes.

(Editor's Note: Mike Hall writes for AFL-CIO Now. He is a former staff writer for the United Mine Workers Journal and managing editor of the Seafarers Log.)

Unionist says it was easier to come to U.S. in earlier years, urges amnesty for illegals

To The Editor:

In response to "Labor movement wants path to citizenship for illegal workers" April 21, 2006. It was a lot easier to migrate to the U.S. and become a citizen when my great grandmother fled Germany in the 1890s. Today it is much more difficult to obtain a visa and obtain citizenship via so-called "legal" channels. Yet, many individuals are fleeing countries that have been devastated by the ravages of "free trade" and U.S. military imperialism to come here.

I disagree with Bob Shiprack that undocumented workers are the criminals. And, I disagree with Don McIntosh downplaying the extreme poverty in Mexico that is driving immigrants to the U.S. by saying Mexico ranks 53 in on the United Nations Index of Human Development. The real criminals are not the desperate young people, workers and families that make the hazardous border crossing at great risk to their lives. The real criminals are the mega-corporations that line the borders with their maquiladoras that

pay poverty wages. In Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, a city flooded with maquiladoras, there is an epidemic of brutal murders of young women. The wanton violence the female population is experiencing in the streets directly relates to lack of value these women have in their workplace under free-trade agreements.

The solution is not to close the borders or bring back the racist guest worker programs that amount to indentured servitude. Nor should the government look to instituting quota systems that exclude individuals because their skin is too dark or their eyes are too slanted for the likes of a whiter America.

We need to eliminate the free-trade agreements that are devastating the economies of other countries, forcing their populations to migrate. We must give all undocumented immigrants full amnesty and we must open the borders. Only in this way, can the bosses not use the threat of deportation to exploit undocumented labor. Labor needs to play a stronger solidar-

ity in organizing undocumented workers into unions. Instead of blaming immigrants for the lack of jobs, we need to bring the troops home from Iraq and use the money saved to create jobs that pay living wages for all.

Glenn Kirkendall
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Portland

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