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San Luis Obispo County Telegram-Tribune

Democrats' picnic notes historical role of American labor

ATASCADERO

By Carol Roberts
Telegram-Tribune

Unions, the minimum wage increase and labor in general were what folks talked about Monday at the Democrats' annual Labor Day picnic at Atascadero Lake.

Rep. Walter Capps, the keynote speaker, offered a history of workers going back to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. He said there are still some things that need to be worked on in the "Second Bill of Rights" that Roosevelt asked Congress to take care of in the 1940s.

State Sen. Jack O'Connell also spoke. He said the federal government is moving in the right direction with the recent minimum wage increase and Sandi Ford talked about the importance of labor unions.

Larry and Torre Houlgate-West, the first-over husband and wife co-chairpersons of the Democratic Central Committee, said they were happy with a turnout of about 350 people who dined on chicken barbecued by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and several members of the building trades.

"This year's picnic attendance," said Houlgate-West, a Cal Poly philosophy professor, "is great for an off-election year."

His wife, an author and poet, called the picnic "the most pro-labor one I've ever been to." She believes the recent strike of UPS workers "raised public conscious-

ness."

Capps praised the unions and then harkened back to the "Roosevelt rights" he said he'll continue to work on with Congress. "What

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- Walter Capps, congressman

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Roosevelt, he said, wanted to make sure everyone had a living wage and a proper education so that the prosperity and security for all could be insured. He does, too.

Those rights, Capps said, are just as important today. They are the right:

"To a useful and remunerative job.

"To earn enough to provide adequate food, clothing and recreation.

"Of every farmer to raise and sell his products at a return that will give him and his family a decent living.

"Of every businessperson to trade in an atmosphere of freedom from unfair competition.

"Of every family to a decent home.

"To adequate medical care; the right to achieve and enjoy good health.

"To adequate protection from the economic fears of old age, sickness, accident and unemployment.

"The right to a good education."

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