'Et Tu, Chipotle?' Workers Want Fast Food Chains To Support Fair Wages


SHIHO FUKADA, 2003

Farm workers who pick tomatoes used with McDonald's hamburgers and Chipotle's burritos earn about 45 cents for every 32-pound container of tomatoes they pick, working from dawn to dusk without the right to overtime pay.

The 45-cent piece rate has not changed in nearly 30 years. Annual income for farm workers is extremely low—averaging $7,500 to $10,000, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. The vast majority of farm workers receive no benefits—no health insurance, no sick leave, and no vacation pay.

Last year, Taco Bell signed an agreement with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers to pay an additional one cent per pound for tomatoes it purchases. But McDonald's and Chipotle, initially a subsidiary of McDonald's and now a publicly traded company in which McDonald's is the controlling shareholder, have refused to sign a similar agreement to raise wages in the fields.

Although Chipotle's manifesto, "Food With Integrity," takes a strongly activist stance for humane conditions in its supply chain for farm animals, the manifesto says nothing about the conditions under which people are laboring to harvest its produce.

The Coalition is calling on Chipotle to expand its "Food With Integrity" mission to include "Work With Dignity" for farm workers who harvest its tomatoes by improving wages and allowing workers to participate in the protection and advancement of their own rights.

Further, the Coalition is calling on Chipotle to ask McDonald's to join Taco Bell in improving wages and human rights in the fields.

AFL-CIO's CEO PayWatch Website Offers Peek at Top 25 Corporate Super-Pensions

The AFL-CIO has launched a new Executive PayWatch website (www.paywatch.org). It can be used to learn the top 25 pension packages of 2005 and contains a comprehensive database of CEO pay figures. The average CEO of an S&P 500 company received $11.75 million in total compensation in 2005, according to The Corporate Library, and CEO pay continues to rise, creating an enormous gap between the compensation of CEOs and that of rank-and-file workers. The average CEO in 2004 was paid 431 times more than the average worker.

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"A double standard exists for job and retirement security, and workers are not coming out on top," says AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka. "Corporate CEOs have been able to rig the rules of the game in their favor and leave workers and their families on the sidelines."

Six new case studies on CEO super-pension packages show how CEOs guaranteed their own golden pensions while undermining the retirement security of America's working families. Included in the six studies—with guaranteed annual pensions between $4 million and $6.5 million annually—are Pfizer Inc.'s Henry A. "Hank" McKinnell, Exxon Mobil Corporation's Lee R. Raymond, and IBM Corporation's Samuel J. Palmisano. In addition to these, the top 25 largest CEO pensions went to executives of AT&T, United Health Group, Home Depot, Colgate-Palmolive, Comcast, Bank of America, Union Pacific, Exelon, Conoco Phillips, Lockheed Martin, Robert Half International, BellSouth, Anheuser-Busch, Mattel, Coca-Cola, Prudential Financial, FPL Group, Eli Lilly and Company, General Electric, Valero Energy, Countrywide Financial, and PepsiCo.

While more and more often-profitable companies have replaced their workers' traditional defined-benefit pension plans with more risky defined-contribution plans, such as 401(k)s, many CEOs are at the same time receiving what are known as "supplemental executive retirement pensions," often called "top hat" plans, because they are reserved for a select group of managers who receive monster paychecks.