

Second International Pacific Rim Mining & Maritime Unions Seminar

Women's Workshop Tuesday May 24, 2005

Tanya Barrett of ILWU Local 8 opened the workshop by introducing Terri Mast, Secretary Treasurer, Inland Boatmen's Union and Lorraine Ryan, Maritime Union of Australia.

Terri Mast welcomed everyone in attendance and began by having everyone make self-introductions.

The group consisted of workers, women and men, from a wide range of occupations such as call center operators, deck hands, ferry workers, Longshore crane operators, Marine clerks and an attorney in the steel workers union.

The mission of the workshop was to continue the work accomplished at the 1st Maritime and Mining Conference in New Castle Australia in 2002. The conference passed a resolution from the women's caucus to accomplish two goals. One was to increase women participation in future conferences to 10%. The second part of the resolution was to enact training and mentoring programs.

The agenda was reviewed with the emphasis placed on this workshop developing a resolution addressing a consensus on issues women face in the workplace and taking it back to the general session.

Terri Mast gave an overview of the ITF and ITF Women's Committee.

The ITF, International Transportation Federation, established in 1896 consists of 624 unions in 142 countries. Of the 4.5 million workers represented, 13 – 17% are women.

The ITF Women's Committee formulation began in 1994 at the ITF conference held in Geneva, Switzerland. The current committee is comprised of 32 representatives from the various sections and regions of the ITF.

The women's committee was formed at the congress in 1998 a women's officer was put in place and five executive board positions were set-aside for women. In addition one Vice-President position for the ITF executive board

The ITF Women's Committee work on educational projects, conduct research on the issues women face in the workplace, reach out to unorganized women and train women around the world. The maritime industry section is particularly weak with data on women. So it is extremely important for all those in attendance to complete the survey handed out.

At the April 2005 meeting in London the Women's Committee stressed three key aspects of the industrial and political context of the debate on implementing measures for gender equality in the workplace:

1. The seriously damaging and specific impact of neo liberal policies and restructuring of transportation on women transport workers
2. The right-wing political backlash against women's rights to equality at work and in society and the extent and impact of violence against women at work, in the community and home.
3. The growing employment of young women transport workers and the need to develop new ways of organizing that reflect their experience.

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The committee also recommended:

1. A clear agenda item on women's activities high up on all ITF agendas
2. Recognition of the growing importance of call centers.
3. Development of an education module on gender sensitizations for men and women.
4. A new ITF course for women to promote women transport workers' leadership role.
5. Region and section support for affiliate unions, and monitoring to ensure the ITF commitment to at least 30% involvement of women in the ITF education programs.
6. Women's events (conferences, seminars, committees) held alongside regional and sectional events to build women transport workers involvement, with budget support and involvement from both the Women's department and the relevant Section/Region.
7. Ensuring women's network contacts for all unions affiliated with the ITF.
8. Database on Women Transport Workers
9. Promote March 8th and November 25th and other campaign days.
10. Consider the development of an ITF pro-equality campaign.

Terri concluded her report by stressing the goal of this workshop to inform the ITF of the issues facing us as workers and their priority.

Lorraine Ryan of the Maritime Union of Australia spoke on internationalism and solidarity

With the support of Paddy Crumlin, the MUA' National Secretary, 27 union women from all over Australia met three years ago to have their first ever conference addressing the issues women face. The goal of the conference was to put an agenda together for the women's committee and educate women on the role of being a union delegate.

From this conference, the women developed an email/text message network and conference call four times a year providing support for each other. They have opened up an account and fundraise selling shirts, hats, buttons, etc. This money is then donated to certain causes in the name of their committee.

They stressed we, as women have to be heard. We need to have our issues addressed by speaking up and speaking up often. We need to globalize our networks with women workers in New Zealand and the United States and continue to raise the gender issue in our unions.

The committee entertained questions to the presenters.

The next item on the agenda was for the panel of delegates to share their personal experiences.

Cathy Familathe - ILWU Local 13, Dawn DesBrisay - ILWU Local 40, Janita Barton – MUNZ Local 13 and Nicole Watson of the MUA.

The committee broke for lunch.

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After lunch the group watched a film by Maria Brooks entitled, "Shipping Out," a portrayal of women seafarers.

The committee broke into groups to discuss women's issues in the workplace and the union.

The following is a summation of issues reported.

Group 1

Childcare

Harassment on the job

This group feels it is imperative to create a website for on line discussion forums on women's issues globally.

Group 3

Healthcare

Safety on the job

Equipment issues (not being able to fit in harnesses, trucks etc)

Harassment

Sanitary facilities

Casual temporary workers and childcare issues

Group 2

Diesel emissions

Maternity/Paternity

This group felt it was important that a resolution come out of this workshop with the conference going on record supporting forums created in every union for women to discuss issues of mutual concern.

It was also noted that women of color are an integral part of the diverse global workforce of women. The contributions and issues of women of color are unique and require specific acknowledgement and support. The women's workshop recognizes and publicly encourages women of color's participation and leadership.

Terri Mast closed the workshop by emphasizing the importance of women in unions. A resolution will be included in their report. Reflecting on the image of solidarity portrayed in the logo of this conference; we are as strong as our weakest link. By not addressing issues affecting women we encourages that weak link.

For we all know female strength is stronger than any chain.

Respectfully Submitted,
Patricia Aguirre
ILWU Local 63