



THE DISPATCHER

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Page 5: Food caravan helps locked out families in Boron



Drawing the line against corporate greed in Boron

"We're standing up for our communities and for every working family in America"

When the global mining giant Rio Tinto locked out nearly 600 workers in Boron, California, on Sunday morning, Jan. 31, the company was trying to impose a draconian contract on employees that would destroy good jobs at one of the world's largest borax mines.

But instead of surrendering, workers and their families are responding with resolve and resistance, drawing the line against corporate greed in a way that seems to be inspiring working families across America and around the globe. The outcome of this dramatic showdown in California's Mojave Desert will have far-reaching consequences that will shape the direction of labor

struggles at home and abroad for years to come.

Rio Tinto is one the most powerful industrial mining conglomerates on the planet. The company extracts gold, diamonds, iron, and a host of other underground valuables, including borates. The company's clout has been supercharged by billions of dollars in profits from coal and mineral reserves that recently skyrocketed in value, fueling an appetite for mergers and acquisitions but leaving their contempt for unions and communities unchanged.

Rio Tinto's U.S. Borax mine is on the northwest side of Boron, a tiny town with just over 2,000 residents that produces almost half the world supply of borates. Workers have been digging near Boron for more than 80 years, burrowing down 750 feet deep and more than a mile wide to recover

the minerals left behind from an ancient sea. Men and women at the mine now work with huge machines and equipment to transform the minerals into refined borates that are used to make a stunning variety of products, including fertilizers, pesticides, fire retardants, wood preservatives, glass screens for big-screen TVs – and the laundry detergent made famous when "20 Mule Team Borax" was sold by Ronald Reagan who hosted "Death Valley Days" before he became a politician and President.

Perhaps the most surprising treasure that recently emerged from California's largest open-pit mine is the scrappy group of heroes who decided to draw the line against corporate greed after Rio Tinto issued an ultimatum that would have destroyed the good jobs that support Boron and

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Postmaster: Send address changes to The Dispatcher, 1188 Franklin St., San Francisco, CA 94109-6800.



LETTERS TO THE DISPATCHER

Dear Editor,

December 2009 marked the 3rd annual bike drive for Local 4, raising over 100 bikes and numerous toys for abused and neglected kids in foster care. Many thanks to our brothers and sisters in Locals 40 and 92 for their help with this worthy cause.

**Laci Dyer, ILWU Local 4
Vancouver, WA**



From left to right: Chris Dyer, Richie Boyer, Jerry Gagliardi, Wendy Colson, Scott Orrell, Bob Benson, and Laci Dyer

Dear Editor,

I'm a longshore mechanic at Local 23 in Tacoma. I've had a positive experience in our union with much better representation and solidarity from my brothers and sisters here in the ILWU than I did with the other union where I was once a member. I also feel more comfortable speaking out and sharing my thoughts and ideas.

I sometimes see companies discriminating or practicing favoritism against some of our members by claiming that we "lack training and qualifications" for certain mechanical jobs. If we had a training program, it would make it harder for employers to discriminate against us. Local 23's Labor Relations Committee (LRC) is working with the Bates Vocational Tech School here in Tacoma to set up a training program that could help some of the 150 mechanics, and any brothers and sisters in our local who want to train to be

a mechanic. I want to help our local officers get a training program in place because I think it would benefit all our members and protect everyone from discrimination and favoritism. The PMA and employers have been unwilling to help us with the training program, but we should keep pushing them to do the right thing. A good training program could also help protect our ILWU jurisdiction by preventing companies from using non-ILWU contractors to do work that we should perform.

**Brent Leinum
Tacoma, WA**

Dear Editor,

We appreciated the wonderful article that ran in the December *Dispatcher* about our effort to encourage local high school students to stay in school instead of dropping out, using an inspirational poster featuring President Obama. Every single high school in our area now has a copy of this poster, thanks to the ILWU Northern California District Council that provided funding for printing and distributing these posters. While the *Dispatcher* reported that a framed copy of the poster was presented to the International Union at our 2009 convention by Bob Tilden and Ruth McMaster, the presentation was actually made by NCDC chair Lawrence Thibeaux.

Sincerely,
**Gene Davenport
Local 54**

Send your letters to the editor to: *The Dispatcher*, 1188 Franklin St., San Francisco, CA 94109-6800 or email to editor@ilwu.org

Portland awards heroism medal to ILWU member Jim Daw

Late last summer, Local 8 longshore worker Jim Daw was driving to work at the Port of Portland when he saw a woman being attacked beside the road. Without hesitation, Daw stopped his pick-up and approached the struggle.

Daw saw that the woman, who was working in her job as a Portland police officer at the time, was overpowered by a suspect who was clearly out of control. Daw twice pulled the man off the woman and restrained him until additional law enforcement arrived at the scene and made an arrest.

On Jan. 26, the city recognized Daw's heroism by giving him the 2009 Civilian Heroism Medal in front of an audience of several hundred people.

"Quite a few people saw what was going on, but Jim was the only one who was willing to get involved and put his safety on the line," said Gordon Guendell, an off-duty Washington State Trooper who saw the struggle at the scene and stopped to help. "Without Jim, it would have been a lot harder to get the suspect under control."



After the ceremony, several people personally thanked Daw, including Portland Police Chief Rosie Sizer, who said, "If I were in the field, I'd want you to be with me."

Daw downplayed the recognition by saying that his actions were "not a big deal," but his parents, Viola and Local 8 pensioner Thomas Daw, thought otherwise.

"I am proud," said Mrs. Daw. "He's a good kid."

By Jennifer Sargent

Eureka stands up to dock leasing



When a contractor for utility giant Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) hired out-of-town workers to load and unload barges in Humboldt Bay, Local 14 took action to defend longshore jurisdiction. From Feb. 2 - 13, members picketed the docks every day, deploying boats for water pickets on a few occasions. They also blocked heavy equipment from entering the terminal, leafleted in front of PG&E facilities, generated coverage in the local print and broadcast media and mobilized for the local Harbor Commission meeting.

With its nearly two weeks of actions, Local 14 took on a problem that faces longshore locals up and down the coast: the leasing of public docks to private companies. These leases to private companies open the door for hiring non-ILWU workers to do traditional longshore work. As a result of Local 14's work, the Harbor Commission established a committee to review the problems with the PG&E operation. Local 14 President and Business Agent Damian Mooney has been appointed to sit on this new committee and is planning a strong push to revise the Harbor District's policy on leasing docks to private companies.

DISPATCHER

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Communications Director and Senior Editor

ILWU TITLED OFFICERS
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Ray A. Familathe, Vice President, Mainland
Wesley Furtado, Vice President, Hawaii
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Drawing the line against corporate greed in Boron

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more than a dozen surrounding communities. This unlikely group of heroes includes workers and their families, friends and neighbors, teachers and small business owners, coaches and ministers, Mormons, Lutherans, Evangelicals and Catholics, pensioners, and retired military. They live in a remote section of California called the “high desert” that includes the tiny towns of Boron, Amboy, and Four Corners, along with larger towns like Mojave that sometimes seem dwarfed by the Tehachapi Mountains to the west that become the Sierra Nevada range further north and the sprawling desert suburbs of Lancaster and Palmdale to the south. Los Angeles is 100 miles away, but it seems much farther.

“We’ve got to feed our families – we want to work!”

The line taken by families against Rio Tinto’s corporate greed isn’t the only line in Boron. Borax Road runs for two miles in a nearly straight line that connects the Rio Tinto mine with the union hall for members of ILWU Local 30. This landlocked local consist of 600 members who decided to affiliate with the ILWU back in 1964 after meeting longshore workers on the docks in Wilmington, California,

where Rio Tinto still ships most of their borate products to customers around the world.

Rio Tinto bought the mine from U.S. Borax in 1968, and the company started trouble almost immediately. The new owners tried to eliminate highly skilled individual trade positions and merged them into a single “millwright” classification. This and other concerns prompted workers to strike, resulting in some improvements, but the safety problems worsened because employees lacked skills and proper training for dangerous work assignments. The company’s failure to protect workers resulted in the deaths of seven millwrights between 1975 and 1982, inspiring workers to draw a new line that challenged the company’s careless disregard for human life. More members got involved and were encouraged to become “safety advocates.”

Rio Tinto kept pushing an anti-worker agenda throughout the ‘80s and ‘90s that included efforts to outsource jobs, and create a two-tier pay and benefits scale to create a wedge between new and old workers. The company campaigned for greater “flexibility” that would allow Rio Tinto to fire anyone and anytime, without “just cause” protection. Workers managed to hold the line most of the time against these company demands, but the tensions continued.

A few weeks ago, another line sud-



Locked-out worker Mike Shanklin holds up the Jan. 31 Los Angeles Times with its front-page story on the showdown in Boron. Local 30 President Dave Liebengood looks on.



Borax workers marched on Rio Tinto with their friends and neighbors the morning the company locked them out. (Above) Will and Meranda Brown and their three children, Tyann (with sign), Kole (in Will’s arms) and Tanith. (Below, left to right) Geronimo Duarte, Larry Roberts, Rion Hufford, Terri Judd, all workers to come dressed in their work clothes and ready to work on Jan. 31st when the lockout occurred.



denly appeared in Boron, a curious wavy line of fluorescent orange paint that someone sprayed across the width of the Borax Road. The meaning of the new line became clear just after the sun rose early Sunday morning on Jan. 31. The temperature that morning hovered around freezing and the wind, which often blows so hard in the high desert, was unusually still, making it possible to hear the voices of people who were quietly talking as they walked toward the line, still a mile away.

The Jan. 31 date when workers and their families were walking toward the line was no accident. Rio Tinto officials carefully chose the last day of January, in order to inflict the maximum possible pain on the 600 families. By beginning the lockout on the last day of the month, workers and their families would immediately lose the company health insurance coverage that would expire the very next day, on Feb. 1.

Less than 72 hours before that Sunday morning, Rio Tinto officials issued a shocking ultimatum to workers: either agree to all of the company’s draconian demands – or be thrown out of work and on to the street. The company’s demands included:

1. The power to convert full-time jobs, whenever management wants, into part-time positions with few or no benefits. (Lockout Ultimatum Art. II, § 6)
2. Authority to reduce employee pay, any time the company wants, regardless of the contract wage rates and without any right of workers to file a grievance. (Lockout Ultimatum Art. II, § 6; Art. VI, § 1; Art. VI, § 10))
3. The ability to outsource all jobs, any time it wants, to contractors

- and temp agencies that pay low wages and provide few or no benefits, without any right to file a worker grievance. (Lockout Ultimatum Art. II, § 6; Art. XV)
4. The requirement that, if Rio Tinto violates any state or federal labor laws, which it already has done, workers would pay for the company’s legal penalties, fines, damages and even attorney fees. (Lockout Ultimatum Art. II, § 1; Art. II, § 2)
5. The unlawful discrimination against military personnel by denying them seniority credit for military service unless they’ve worked at least one year with the company and served in the Armed Forces for less than four years, which constitutes a violation of federal law (USERRA). (Lockout Ultimatum Art. XI, § 7)
6. The removal of scores of workers from the union contract and power to declare entire sections of the plant to be “non-union” areas where employees could be fired at any time, for any reason, or for no reason at all. (Lockout Ultimatum Art. I, § 2; Art. II, § 6; Art. V, § 3)
7. The ability at any time to change shifts, hours and work assignments, and impose mandatory overtime, with no scheduled days-off or regular shifts, making life impossible for families. (Lockout Ultimatum Art. II, § 6; Art. VII, § 2)
8. The requirement that workers give up their Constitutional and legal right as Americans to go to court if this foreign-owned company discriminates based on race, sex, age, disability, military status or religion, or if it violates any other

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Drawing the line in Boron

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state or federal laws, including the U.S. Civil Rights Act, FMLA, ADA, ERISA, FLSA. Under the Rio Tinto lockout contract, all legal rights would be transferred from American courts to a private arbitrator, which the company gets to pick in at least half the cases. (Lockout Ultimatum Art. V, § 4(e)(1)&(2); Art. V, § 5)

9. Authority to eliminate long-term disability coverage for any new employee, which protects workers — and provides economic security to families — when an employee is injured and can't work. (Lockout Ultimatum Art. XVI, § 7)
10. The drastic reduction of retirement benefits for current employees, and the total elimination of pension benefits for new employees who would only get a small 401(k) contribution. (Lockout Ultimatum Art. XVII & Appendix "A")

To increase the severity of Rio Tinto's threat, the company began busing replacement workers into the plant as they delivered the lockout threat.

On Saturday morning, the day before the company's threatened lockout deadline, 500 workers gathered at their union hall to discuss and debate what to do next. The meeting lasted several hours. Everyone had a chance to express their views and ask questions. The company's demands were discussed in detail, but when it was over the workers reached a clear decision, voting unanimously to refuse the company's demand to impose the outrageous contract.

The following morning, workers and families gathered shortly after sunrise at their union hall and began walking out Borax Road toward the line. Families pushed their baby strollers while groups of friends from work carried their lunch boxes and wore hardhats covered with colorful union stickers. Many carried American flags, and walked with community supporters who wanted to be there for this important day. One of those supporters was Ted Hodgkinson, a former Rio Tinto employee who spent 32 years working at Boron — including two years in management.

"After all my years working up there, with some of it on the management side, I can tell you that Borax really needs a union up there to keep the company honest and make things fair for the workers," said Hodgkinson.

The scattered group of several hundred kept walking along the road bordered by an endless expanse of

sagebrush, tumbleweed and creosote bushes that spread on either side. A squad of Kern County Sheriff's deputies came into view, looking strangely out of place, dressed in their riot gear helmets and protective shields, facing women and children along with workers carrying American flags who kept marching closer.

The marchers stopped briefly to wait for the young families pushing strollers and older supporters who brought up the rear. After everyone came together, the group returned to the road and took a few steps forward, coming closer to the sheriffs. The bright orange line was now clearly visible, and it seemed to draw the families closer, increasing the pace of their steps. The sheriffs took a few steps back, coming closer to the group of private security guards employed by a professional union-busting firm hired by Rio Tinto. A few company officials also lurked in the background, wearing sunglasses and staying behind the union-busting guards.

A few final steps brought the marchers to the edge of the bright orange line. On one side stood the oddly beautiful assortment of workers, spouses, and children; flags, hardhats and lunch boxes; older folks using canes and babies bundled in strollers against the chilly morning air.

A few raised their voices, immediately followed by others, saying simply: "We want to work, we want to work!" One man broke with the others, saying "We've got families to feed — we want to work!" Others joined with their own sentiments, saying "We've got children, we want to work." As the chorus grew louder, the figures on the other side of the line who wore sunglasses started to slink away from the marchers at the line and retreat toward the plant. All eyes were now fixed on the Rio Tinto officials who turned away, unable to face the workers and families who were glaring at the anger and sadness of the injustice symbolized by the line. A few of the workers' wives wiped tears from their eyes as their families and friends comforted them, saying "We'll get through this," and "It will be OK."

Together the marchers began the mile-long walk back to the union hall where they joined committees that will collect and distribute groceries, raise donations, mobilize community and political support, and talk to the media. By the next day, ILWU members and workers from other unions were calling Boron to commend the workers and families for their courage and offer solidarity and support for the struggle ahead.



Help the locked out families: donate today!

Send your check to:
"Local 30 Lockout" c/o ILWU,
1188 Franklin Street, San
Francisco, CA 94109.

Thank you.

ILWU International ramps up Boron fight

The ILWU International is stepping up to help Local 30 members win their fight against Rio Tinto with an all-sided plan that includes extensive staffing, fundraising and strategic support.

Early Help

When Rio Tinto locked out nearly 600 families Jan. 31, the ILWU International officers had already been monitoring the situation in Boron for nearly a year. They had assigned the ILWU's research director to assist Local 30's Negotiating Committee and asked the communications director to produce a series of stickers, signs and banners, as well as 18 "Contract Bulletins" to keep members informed on key issues.

As Rio Tinto's negotiating posture hardened around its demands that would destroy good jobs, the ILWU Organizing Department assigned a full-time International Organizer to work with Local 30's Contract Action Team composed of 40 volunteers dedicated to keeping co-workers informed and involved.

Major Boost

When Rio Tinto refused to reach a fair settlement before the contract expired on Nov. 4, International President Bob McEllrath and Secretary-Treasurer Willie Adams visited Local 30 members and attend their rally. (International Vice President Ray Familathe was on the job in Sydney, Australia organizing solidarity with the Maritime Union of Australia.) In the following months, the Organizing Department assigned a Strategic Researcher to investigate Rio Tinto's operations. Since the lockout, the International Union has taken more steps to help Local 30 members:

- **Raising funds to help Local 30 members facing emergencies get immediate help:** ILWU locals have been asked to make immediate contributions, and are answering the call.
- **Creating a weekly pledge system to allow for ongoing support.** The International has made arrangements with key ILWU credit unions to allow for automatic weekly deductions.
- **Sending Local 30 a contribution of \$10,000** from the International Union's general fund to help cover local expenses. The International Officers will also consider additional specific requests for assistance from Local 30.
- **Assisting public outreach efforts** by Local 30 members who are visiting ILWU locals, other unions, churches, and community groups to raise funds and build support.
- **Building solidarity among unions across the country.** International President Bob McEllrath, who sits on the AFL-CIO Executive Board, is involved in the nationwide union solidarity outreach effort.
- **Coordinating international solidarity.** International Vice President Ray Familathe and Secretary-Treasurer Willie Adams are building the international outreach. They hosted an International Mining and Maritime meeting in Southern California Feb. 16-17 that allowed union leaders from around the world to meet and march with Local 30 families.
- **Putting four ILWU International organizers into the fight full time.** Two are helping families at Local 30, one is helping mobilize community support throughout Southern California, and another is working out of Local 13 to help coordinate support from ILWU locals.
- **Informing elected officials in Washington about Rio Tinto's lockout in Boron and monitoring Rio Tinto's legislative and political activities,** through the ILWU's Legislative Director in Washington, D.C.
- **Deepening the union's understanding of Rio Tinto's operations** through the work of the Organizing Department's strategic researcher.
- **Helping Local 30 members send their story out as far as possible,** through the full-time work of the ILWU's communications director.
- **Providing legal counsel.** The ILWU's lawyers are working to help win the fight in Boron, as assigned by the International Union.

"The ILWU is committed to helping the families at Local 30 win this fight, and we're committing the resources to make that possible," said President Bob McEllrath. "The stakes are high for everyone, so all of us need to step up and get involved."



Hundreds of Boron workers have pitched in to keep a 24/7 watch at the Rio Tinto gates since the company locked them out. Shown here (left to right): Milo Powell, Jim Davis, Scott Lasky, Terri Judd, Ron Green, Eric Carter, Jim Lank, Dave Bumgardner, Mike Howard, ILWU International Vice President Ray Familathe, BJ Perkins, Jaren Garrett.

Boron families get support from around the world

Union leaders representing workers on four continents rallied with the locked-out workers in Boron Feb. 16, bringing messages of support from Africa, Australia/New Zealand, Europe and all over North America. The Mining and Maritime (M&M) Initiative meeting in Palmdale, CA Feb. 16-17 drew together about two dozen representatives of unions and union federations who share common goals and common enemies.

"This is a global fight," said ILWU International Secretary-Treasurer William E. Adams. "Workers at mining companies all over the world are under attack, and the companies are doing the same things. They are trying to do away with seniority, job security and arbitration, to rewrite the rules to make workers servants and slaves. They need to be called on their behavior and together we can do it."

Secretary-Treasurer Adams co-chaired the M&M meeting with ILWU International Vice President/Mainland Ray Familathe. International Vice President/Hawaii Wesley Furtado attended as well. Other participants included officers from the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA), the Maritime Union of New Zealand (MUNZ), the South African Transport and Allied Workers Union (SATAWU) and the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF); Australia's Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU), the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine, and General Workers' Unions (ICEM) and the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF); the National Mineworkers' Union and the chemical, energy and paper workers' union (CEPPWAWU) from South Africa, the Turkish miners' union, the United Steelworkers and International Longshoremen's Association Locals 1422 and 1526.

At the same time the mining and maritime leaders were meeting in Palmdale, union members in Australia were protesting in front of the Rio Tinto offices in Melbourne at a rally called by the MUA, and the MUNZ staged an action in Wellington.

"We call on the company to immediately return to a process of good faith bargaining and desist from further labor rights abuses at the mine," wrote ITF Dockers' Section Secretary Paddy Crumlin of the MUA and CFMEU General Secretary Andrew Vickers in a joint statement. "We pledge our full support for the distressed workers and their families."

Attendees at the Palmdale meeting signed a declaration of support for the locked-out Boron workers and for the workers at Grupo México's Cananea copper mine. ILWU Vice President Familathe and the MUA delegates followed up with a protest at the Mexican consulate in Los Angeles the day after the M&M meeting ended. "We can't stand by and watch a government anywhere in the world do what Mexico has done and gang up with corporations to destroy good jobs," Familathe said.



ILWU members and officers joined international mining and maritime leaders in for the Feb. 16 rally in Boron. (Top, left to right) ICEM's Joe Drexler, Stephen Hunt of the USW, Mick Doleman from the MUA, Ken Riley from ILA Local 1422 and ILWU International Vice President/Hawaii Wesley Furtado. (Right) ILWU International Secretary-Treasurer William E. Adams. (Far right) Oupa Koumane, National Union of Mineworkers, South Africa.



And while the Mining and Maritime leaders met in California, workers belonging to the MUA protested outside Rio Tinto's offices in Melbourne, Australia (left).

Nourishing solidarity: working families send food to Boron



Around 80 community volunteers, including Rachel Cordova (left) helped unload and bag a truckload of groceries sent to Boron by working families around the country. They passed the boxes along a human chain from the truck to the hall (right) where a crew including Michael Franks and Hildegard Judd packed grocery bags (top right).

A truckload of groceries arrived in Boron Feb. 15, sent by working families around the country to support and encourage the families of the locked-out Rio Tinto workers. The AFL-CIO, a national union network that links 15 million working families, organized the shipment and collected the contributions that bought the food.

"We want to thank them for all the support," said Jerry Cordova, a locked-out heavy equipment operator with 24 years at the mine. "It sends chills up my back knowing we aren't by ourselves in this fight."

It took the 80-some community volunteers less than an hour to unload the small box-truck that was full up with pallets. They passed boxes hand-to-hand along a human chain from the truck to the inside of the ILWU Local 30 hall, where they packed up around 500 grocery bags to be delivered in the days that followed.

"The food people donated will really help our union," said Rachel Cordova, who went to the unloading with her father Jerry, just as she accompanies him to the picket line. Rachel, 11, is a Girl Scout Cadet. She and other members of her troop are talking to their leaders about other projects they can do to help the locked-out families. They will have another chance to help with food donations Feb. 24, when the Los Angeles County AFL-CIO will send a caravan "From the Docks to the Desert" to help the locked-out families.

ILWU officers arrested for supporting San Francisco hotel workers

Negotiating a union contract with powerful employers is always a tough job, and doing it in the middle of a deep recession is even more daunting. But 9,000 San Francisco hotel workers are meeting that challenge with militancy, courage, and community support – including participation from the ILWU.

ILWU International President Bob McEllrath and Vice President Ray Familathe joined other ILWU activists, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, and Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union President John Wilhelm to march with more than 1,000 labor and community activists through the streets of downtown San Francisco Jan. 5. The massive and noisy march tied up rush hour traffic for hours and climaxed in front of the Hilton Hotel, where McEllrath and Familathe were arrested and handcuffed along with 140 others who sat down in front of the hotel entrances near Union Square and refused to leave.

Big hotel chains control the industry

Hotel workers spoke at the rally, describing their daily work routines which include cleaning bathrooms, making beds, and serving meals in San Francisco's best hotels. Many of these hotels were once locally owned, but now are controlled by huge international chains like Hilton, Hyatt, InterContinental and Starwood. Local hotel managers no longer have authority to settle contracts. Decisions come from the highest corporate level.

The consolidation of today's hotel industry follows a long pattern of industrial concentration that has challenged unions to change tactics and develop strategies to cope with larger and more powerful employers.

Seeking a national contract like the coastwise longshore agreement.

Like the ILWU members 76 years ago who fought for the "coastwise"



Protest at the Hilton: (right to left) California Labor Federation Executive Secretary-Treasurer Art Pulaski, ILWU International President Robert McEllrath and ILWU International Vice President Ray Familathe sat down in the street in front of the San Francisco Hilton, along with some 140 other union leaders and members.

agreement that set uniform standards for all West Coast ports, hotel workers are now fighting for a national contract that would set standards for workers in major cities who work for the giant hotel chains. San Francisco hotel workers are spearheading this national campaign, having built a strong, militant union that has won good contracts which could serve as a model for a national hotel agreement.

But before they could begin thinking about the possibility of a national contract, San Francisco hotel workers had to fight in 2004-2006 to align the expiration date of their contract with other hotel agreements in major cities. Employers understood the implications of a common expiration date and did everything possible to prevent workers in San Francisco from uniting with their co-workers across the country.

When the big chains refused to let workers have a common contract expiration date, San Francisco workers struck four hotels in late 2004.

Employers retaliated by locking out workers at 14 other hotels. Constant, noisy picket lines, an aggressive boycott campaign, and pressure from political leaders finally ended the lockout after two months – but the big hotel chains continued to resist demands from San Francisco hotel workers for a common expiration date.

It took two more years of boycotting, picketing, and community pressure to win against the big hotels, but in late 2006, San Francisco hotel workers won their fight to negotiate at the same time with workers in New York, Chicago, Boston, Los Angeles, and other cities.

Using the recession to squeeze concessions

The large hotel chains have remained profitable during the recession. The Blackstone Group, parent company of the Hilton chain, paid CEO Stephen Schwartzman \$1.39 billion?? dollars in 2008. The Starwood chain reported profits of \$180 million dur-



President McEllrath, arrested in solidarity with the hotel workers.

ing the first three quarters of 2009, and Hyatt launched a public share offering in late 2009 that netted the big chain nearly \$1 billion in cash.

These supersized profits haven't stopped the hotels from trying to scare workers during the recession by constantly talking about the bad business climate and empty hotel rooms. The big chains continue to resist union efforts to move toward a national contract, and have balked at paying modest 1.5% increases to cover higher health and retirement costs for workers. ILWU-represented workers are also dealing with employers, including Rio Tinto and Rite Aid, that are trying to take full advantage of the economic downturn.

"These fights are about much more than a hotel like the Hilton, or even the entire industry," ILWU International President Bob McEllrath said after his arrest. "They're about the power of workers and the community to push back against powerful corporations that are running unchecked and ruining our country. The American people have to be part of these fights to make companies more accountable for everyone."



AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, Familathe and McEllrath marching through San Francisco's financial district.

Gene Vrana's final day in the stacks



Passing the torch: Longtime ILWU Librarian, Archivist & Education Director Gene Vrana retired at the end of January. Robin Walker has assumed the duties of Librarian & Archivist.

In 1969 Brother Gene Vrana became a registered longshore worker in Local 10, San Francisco. He was active in Local 10 as a steward, absorbing the history and traditions of the ILWU, and returned to college to earn a Masters degree in Applied History in 1986.

The following year he joined the ILWU International as an archivist and research librarian, combining his intimate knowledge of the ILWU with

his professional training to oversee our union's written history.

In 1995, Gene began directing the International's education program and developed the LEAD (Leadership Education and Development) Institutes to train future leaders of the ILWU. He also launched the Secretary-Treasurers Conferences, which trained local financial officers on all aspects of financial management and government reporting.

Gene helped create educational programs for the Longshore Division, and presented a number of stewards'

training workshops for locals. He revised "The ILWU Story: Six Decades of Militant Unionism" and continues to contribute to *The Dispatcher*.

Last year, Brother Vrana advised the union's officers of his retirement. His unique mix of rank-and-file experience, professional training and sense of the ILWU's history and traditions will be irreplaceable. We extend to Gene our deep gratitude for his many years of service to the ILWU, and wish him and his family a long, healthy and enjoyable retirement.

Q & A with Gene

What has surprised you most during your long tenure here?

When I took the job it was my dream job, and it has exceeded my dreams. I wanted to play a part in preserving the the union's history, and in making it available for research and scholars.

What has been most difficult?

Not having enough time to do everything as thoroughly as I would like.

Have you ever been bored?

Not for one second.

Any regrets?

Not one.

Plans for the future?

The reading and writing I've been planning for years, but haven't been able to get to because of the nature of my job. To get out to the ballpark a little more often with my grandkids. I will still be assisting with education programs and events as requested by the officers. My ILWU roots are in Local 10, and I hope to reestablish that connection through the Pensioners Club.

New deal brings gains at Old Kalama grain elevator

A team effort in the Pacific Northwest has brought big improvements to a grain elevator on the Columbia River, and opened up more jobs for members of Local 21 in Longview.

"In December, we had three jobs come through our window for the Old Kalama elevator," said Local 21 President Dan Coffman. "But with the new agreement in place, we had 50 jobs in the first three weeks of January alone."

"Old Kalama," the massive Cenex Harvest States elevator in Kalama,

Washington, has long operated outside of the Northwest Grainhandlers Agreement that covers Portland upriver and Longview downriver. Represented by the International Longshoremen's Association until the 1970's, the 18 workers at Old Kalama were affiliated with ILWU Local 21 but were largely on their own when they went to the bargaining table. Though their wages mirrored those in the main grain agreement, they lacked adequate health care contributions and other protections of registered longshoremen.

Kalama Grainhandlers affiliate president Mike Walton wanted

to work more closely with Local 21, and contacted newly-elected Local 21 President Dan Coffman in the spring of 2009. Coffman spoke with the Coast Committee in San Francisco, and together they convened a negotiating committee that included several Northwest locals.

"Brad Clark at Local 4 was a big help because he knows the industry so well," said Walton. "Negotiating Committee Chair Herald Ugles from Local 19 along with the rest of the negotiating team helped us get the best contract we've ever had."

Signed in January, the new agree-

ment gives a health care contribution increase of \$4.70 an hour and limits the number of casuals the company can hire. Any work beyond the affiliate members and the casuals is filled by Local 21 members, who Walton says are "fast learners" and working out well filling jobs in the elevator.

Finally, the employer signed an agreement not to interfere if the Pacific Maritime Association were to agree to register the 18 affiliate members as bona fide ILWU longshore workers.

"We're very happy," said Walton. "The way everyone worked together made all the difference."

TRANSITIONS

NEW PENSIONERS:

Local 4: Patrick Althuisius; **Local 8:** Doyle R. Degman, George J. Gust, Jr., Larry L. Crippen; **Local 12:** Donald P. Wyatt; **Local 13:** John J. Brunac, Mike J. Huger; **Local 19:** Laurence C. Coblentz; **Local 23:** Gerald T. Faker; **Local 27:** Richard L. Parkhurst; **Local 29:** Thomas Fernandez; **Local 34:** Jerome Y. Lew, Roger D. Phelps, John A. Ghio; **Local 40:** Rick A. Christensen; **Local 52:** Donald L. Walvatne; **Local 54:** Donald R. Huggins;

Local 63: Ronald E. Costa, Michael A. Zamperini, Edna A. Daley, Stephen G. Wright, Norine Connelly-Cowell, Rachel Reyes; **Local 91:** Lloyd E. Taylor, Charles Di Lelio; **Local 92:** Michael A. Johnson

DECEASED:

Local 8: William H. Oxford, Ross L. Bankston, Larry L. Smith; **Local 10:** Isaac Hughes, Sr., Albert Luia, James E. Childs Sr., W. T. Johnson, Addison Hicks Jr.; **Local 13:** Rudolfo Moreno, David S.

Gallardo, Lawrence A. Miller, William Misuraca, Lloyd M. Haley, Robin L. Huhta, David L. Urbeck; **Local 18:** James R. Cuff; **Local 19:** Nathaniel P. Stewart; **Local 21:** Donald A. Grant; **Local 26:** Tarvan D. Thompson; **Local 27:** Clemeth Head; **Local 34:** John W. Reynolds, Richard K. Palo; **Local 75:** T. B. Jones; **Local 91:** Kenneth I. Stenholm; **Local 92:** Hugh I. Clark; **Local 94:** Paul Trujillo, Clarence Armstrong Jr., Paul E. Abreu; **Local 98:** Dale A. Carpenter

DECEASED SURVIVORS:

Local 4: Rosemary Garlock; **Local 7:** Audrey Regnier; **Local 10:** Rosita Charleston, Betty L. Norlin; **Local 13:** Teresa V. Rodriguez; **Local 19:** Fern A. Newton; **Local 24:** Arline Luoto; **Local 50:** Lillian Hreha; **Local 63:** Philamina Rippo; **Local 92:** Janet Gebhardt, Ida M. Hubbard

TRADE we can believe in

MEMBERS SPEAK OUT

ILWU Coast Committeeman Ray Ortiz, Jr. joined U.S. Representatives George Miller and John Garamendi at a January 8 press conference to promote the TRADE Act of 2009 – a proposed law that would require international trade agreements to meet new “fair trade” standards.



ILWU Coast Committeeman Ray Ortiz, Jr. with U.S. Representatives George Miller.

The Trade Reform, Accountability, Development and Employment Act would make existing trade pacts, including the NAFTA and GATT agreements meet stricter labor, environmental, and consumer protection standards. The law would require the President to propose ways to fix any shortcomings in those areas. New trade agreements would also have to meet tougher standards, and some laws that currently conflict with trade laws would become legal again, including:

- Buy America laws
- Anti-sweat shop laws
- Laws that limit the ability of companies to move jobs overseas
- Laws that allow consumers easier access to generic and lower-cost drugs from Canada and other countries.

As the Dispatcher goes to press, the TRADE bill had garnered 136 Congressional supporters. This means we’re over halfway there, but still need to round up more votes to reach the 218 required for passage in the House of Representatives. For more information, visit www.citizen.org/trade/tradeact or call James Ploeser at (202) 454-5111.

“Hi. I’m Ray Ortiz, Junior, an elected Coast Committeeman who represents almost 20,000 dockworkers up and down the West Coast.

Most of what we do everyday involves loading and unloading those

containers that you see stacked up around the ports and being trucked around on the freeways.

We get paid to handle all those containers, but a lot of us see a system that isn’t fair.

The containers we load onto ships to be exported are often empty, while the containers coming into our ports are full of high-value things like TV’s and auto parts that are made in countries where labor standards barely exist.

Made in countries that don’t respect basic human rights.

Made where environmental laws aren’t on the books or aren’t enforced. That’s why we need fair trade, not free trade.

America’s trade laws should work for everyone – not just for Wal Mart, Home Depot, and Target.

We need trade laws that help everyone, instead of rewarding countries with the lowest labor, environmental, and human rights standards.

That’s why the International Longshore and Warehouse Union supports the TRADE Act and why we thank Congressmen George Miller, John Garamendi, and more than 100 other for taking a stand.

How is your local union responding to the economic downturn?



“We’re trying to be more prudent on what we buy and spend. We have a lot of fixed costs, which makes it tough, but we’re tightening our belts on discretionary expenditures and things like charitable donations.”

**Rudy Finne, Local 19
Seattle WA**

“We’ve had to curtail our charitable work in the community, and we’ve raised our dues for the first time in five years — neither of which we like having to do, but we’ve laid out the financial picture for our members and they understand why it’s necessary to make adjustments during this economic crisis.”

**Jennifer Gumm, Local 12
North Bend OR**



“The first priority for a union official is always to ensure the rank and file are working and getting a job. We’re more entrenched than ever in the current work environment with our employers, and we’re fighting to ensure our people can work five or six days a week.”

**George Kuvakas, Local 94
San Pedro CA**

“We paid off our building a few years early, so we were fortunate and in better shape than some when the recession hit us. But we’ve still had to rein in our charitable giving, while continuing to ensure we’re not wasteful in our day-to-day operations.”

**Nancy Jackson, Local 23
Tacoma WA**



ILWU BOOKS & VIDEOS

Books and videos about the ILWU are available from the union’s library at discounted prices!

BOOKS

Solidarity Stories: An Oral History of the ILWU. By Harvey Schwartz. An inspiring collection of first-hand accounts from ILWU union leaders and rank-and-file workers. \$17.00.

A Spark Is Struck: Jack Hall & the ILWU in Hawaii. By Sanford Zalburg: A high quality re-issue of the informative epic account of Jack Hall and the birth and growth of the ILWU in Hawaii \$13.50 (paperback).

Along the Shore/Por la Costa—ILWU Coloring Book. A bi-lingual English/Spanish coloring book about waterfront workers and their union. Originally developed by the California Federation of Teachers’ Labor in the Schools Committee in consultation with member Patricia Aguirre and the ILWU Local 13 Education Committee. Meets K-3 classroom standards for History and Social Studies. Two (2) for \$5.00

The Legacy of 1934: An historical exhibit by the ILWU. Produced as a catalogue to accompany the new traveling historical art exhibit about the origins of the ILWU in the 1934 maritime strike, this brief but vivid publication stands on its own as a pictorial history of the coastwise strike and an account of the extraordinary sacrifices and democratic principles of the founding members of the union. Two (2) for \$5.00

Harry Bridges: The Rise and Fall of Radical Labor in the United States. By Charles Larrowe. A limited number of copies of this out-of-print and useful biography are now available through the book sale by special arrangement with Bolerium Books in San Francisco, which specializes in rare publications and documents about radical and labor history. \$10.00

The ILWU Story. This book unrolls the history of the union from its origins to the present, complete with recollections from the men and women who built the union, in their own words, and dozens of rare photos of the union in action. \$5.00

The Big Strike. By Mike Quin. The classic partisan account of the 1934 strike. \$9.00

The Union Makes Us Strong: Radical Unionism on the San Francisco Waterfront. By David Wellman. The important new study of longshoring in the ILWU. \$20.00 (paperback)

The March Inland: Origins of the ILWU Warehouse Division 1934-1938. By Harvey Schwartz. A new edition of the only comprehensive account of the union’s organizing campaign in the northern California warehouse and distribution industry. \$9.00

VIDEOS

“Eye of the Storm: Our Fight for Justice and a Better Contract.” A 58-minute DVD feature documentary film produced and directed by Amie Williams. Eye of the Storm tells the story of the 2002 longshore lockout on the West Coast. DVD Version \$5.00

“We Are the ILWU.” A 30-minute color video introducing the principles and traditions of the ILWU. Features active and retired members talking about what the union meant in their lives and what it needs to survive and thrive, along with film clips, historical photos and an original musical score. DVD or VHS version \$5.00

“Life on the Beam: A Memorial to Harry Bridges.” A 17-minute DVD of the original video production by California Working Group, Inc., memorializes Harry Bridges through still photographs, recorded interviews, and reminiscences. Originally produced for the 1990 memorial service in San Francisco. DVD \$5.00

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