Walking In the Footsteps of Fallen Martyrs

Only a handful of union veterans are still alive today who remember the 1934 waterfront strike that led to the founding of the ILWU. The specter of losing those remaining men who witnessed an epic struggle on the docks 75 years ago moved hundreds to celebrate in Southern California by marching and witnessing the unveiling of a new memorial in San Pedro on a sunny May day.

On the morning of Friday, May 15, hundreds of longshore workers and family members gathered together with port truckers, firefighters, and community supporters at a deserted intersection on the edge of the scrappy port town of Wilmington, Calif. The group assembled there to be as close as they could to the site where two longshore strikers were shot exactly 75 years ago. Twenty-year-old striker Richard “Doc” Parker was shot in the chest and died on his way to the hospital in the early morning hours of May 15, 1934. Striker John Knudsen, 51, was also shot there and died a few weeks later. Other strikers were shot and beaten—some of them seriously—after leading a brave charge against armed guards who were protecting a camp of strikebreakers employed by stevedore and shipping companies.

The 1934 strike that shut down the West Coast ports would eventually cost five other strikers their lives before a victory was secured that included a coastwise contract, hiring halls, and the beginnings of a union that would become the ILWU.

The crowd that assembled to mark the occasion 75 years later listened attentively to a brief but inspiring round of speeches from Local 13 President George Lujan, Local 63 member Peter Peyton, and Local 94 President Danny Miranda. Each speaker noted that the first blood to flow in the 1934 strike was shed on the docks of Wilmington, within sight of where everyone was now standing.

Walking the martyrs’ walk
When the speeches were finished, the group of 200 began their three-mile march down Harry Bridges Boulevard. Their destination was Gibson Park in San Pedro, where pensioners and politicians were waiting to inaugur ate a new memorial to the martyrs who gave their lives in the ’34 strike—along with a memorial tribute to all the other longshore workers who have died on the docks since the union was founded.

The march was a family affair, with plenty of children in tow and babies in strollers. “I wanted my kids to be here today so they could be a part of history and remember this when they grow up,” said Nick Olson who marched with his wife Jennifer, toing daughter Hailey and Isabel in a wagon and carrying Nick Jr. in a backpack.
Dear Editor,

I greatly enjoy reading the Dispatcher, each issue as it comes out. It is a great publication and so full of interesting information.

I was an active member for 45 years and have been retired now for 18 years. In my opinion, the ILWU is the best union in the nation. The pension is great and the medical coverage is outstanding. I've had many medical procedures at no cost to me. I've had hearing aids and eye care at little cost.

Brothers and sisters, support your union 100 percent. I'm proud to be a member of the ILWU.

Ralph Tennant, Local 63, ret.
Garden Grove, CA

Dear Editor,

The memorial established in San Pedro to honor dockworkers killed on the job at the LA and Long Beach Harbors is an important way to remind all of us about the history of our union and those who have lost their lives on the docks. I'd like to note that two additional ILWU workers have lost their lives while working on the docks. Rudy Acosta was a guard who died the day after Labor Day in 2002 when he was struck by a top-handler at a dangerous intersection that had been ignored by officials at Pacific Container Terminal operated by SSA. Several years earlier, guard John Hansis was struck and killed on the docks by a utility truck. Both these guards deserve our recognition and respect, along with all workers who have perished while working on the docks.

Luisa Gratz, Local 26 President & International Executive Board member
Los Angeles, CA

Dear Editor,

Coast Committeeeman Leal Sundet hit the nail on the head when he said, “It’s time for Congress to face the fact that the TWIC program has nothing to do with improving security at the ports….TWIC was a political response to the 9/11 attacks.” [“Port security: TWIC cards aren’t the answer,” Dispatcher, May 2009].

Congress has a lot of facts to face and a lot of questions to answer. As an example, an overwhelming majority of people support a national, single-payer health care program. Fifty-nine percent of the doctors here in the U.S. do, too. So who is Congress representing?

In early May, Senator Max Baucus (D-MT) had single-payer advocates—including some doctors from Physicians for a National Health Program—arrested at a meeting of the Senate Finance Committee. Their crime? They wanted to be included in what have now become sham “health care reform” hearings. The only people who were allowed to speak were apologists for the medical-industry complex. The game was and is rigged.

LITTLE WONDER. The medical-industry complex has been quite generous to old Max. Medical insurers, for-profit hospitals, and the pharmaceutical industry have tossed millions his way. Alas, he is not alone. Politicians from both sides of the aisle have their hands buried deep in the pockets of the medical-industry complex. They have sold their souls to their corporate benefactors. And working-class America gets sold out!

What has this got to do with TWIC? Money….as in “follow the money.” Every aspect of TWIC has been sold to corporations that know how to treat lawmakers right. Campaign contributions purchase results! I may not know all there is to know about TWIC, but I sure as hell know a three-card Monte scam when I see one. I see it in the taxpayer funded bailouts of financial institutions. I see it in the tax forgiveness schemes handed out to Daddy Warbucks and oil companies. The evidence is all around us. And make no mistake, after this current economic crisis has subsided one fact will remain: The wealthy will have entered the crisis wealthy and will emerge wealthy. Only working class families will have suffered.

Over the years the members and leaders of the ILWU have been out in front in the struggle for social and economic justice. But we cannot do it alone. Unfortunately, too many “labor statesmen” in other organizations have grown too predictable, too timid, and too comfortable. Labor needs resurgence. We need to return to our roots. Our heritage didn’t have us going to lawmakers with our hats in our hands. We didn’t settle for what we were told was “politically feasible.” Our forbears demanded what the ranks needed!

We won’t get true health care reform or social and economic justice without a fight! It will take millions of us marching and picketing and protesting and laying down our tools until justice is won. That’s how the pioneers of labor did it. Now it is our turn.

It’s time once again to honor the holy scripture of labor: “An injury to one is an injury to all.” And when certain suits and ties tell us to slow down we need to shout out the words of Thomas Paine, “Lead, follow, or get out of the way.”

Rich Austin, President
Pacific Coast Pensioners Association

In the May issue of The Dispatcher, we neglected to identify George Cobb, Local 10 retired and president of the Bay Area Pensioners, in the photo of Northern California District Council members appearing on page 2. We regret the omission.

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

This Land Is Our Land: Commercial and residential developers looking to snap up prime waterfront land near ports have frequently clashed with ILWU members trying to protect jobs and industry in key port towns. Washington State recently passed legislation that provides better protection for maritime ports and should make it harder for developers to take port land for inappropriate residential use. The ILWU lobbied hard to include Everett, Vancouver and Longview ports in the Container Ports Land Use Bill, which originally targeted only Seattle and Tacoma. “This was a landmark bill,” said Jeff Davis, president of the Puget Sound District Council. “One of my personal goals since joining the council was to do what we could to protect public ports and this bill is a monumental step in that direction.” Meanwhile, there are ongoing battles to safeguard land that supports port activities in Oakland, Los Angeles, and San Diego. From left: Jeff Davis, Washington Gov. Chris Gregoire; Puget Sound District Council legislative advocate Gordon Baxter.

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Southland ILWU members march to honor new memorial

continued from page 1

The three-mile march seemed to lengthen a bit as the heat of the day increased, but cold bottles of water arrived just in time to refresh the contingent as they neared Gibson Park.

Al Perisho of the Southern California Pensioners Group emceed the event with help from Lou Lovendige and Ray Panzico. Current and former local officers were recognized from the podium, along with former International Presidents James Spinoso and David Arian who were both on-hand. Local 8 Auxiliary President Carol Chapman and her team of volunteers were thanked for their service along with the many pensioners who pitched in to make the day a success.

Bagpiper Elizabeth Ford began the formal ceremony by playing “Amazing Grace” prior to the presentation of colors from the local VFW chapter. An invocation by Port Chaplain Rev. Arthur Bartlett preceded a reading by pensioner Rino Knudsen, along with the names of the 61 other fallen brothers.

International officers were on-hand, including Vice President Joe Radisch, Secretary-Treasurer Willie Adams, and Coast Committeeman Ray Ortiz Jr. All three urged past and present members to remember the ILWU’s legacy of sacrifice and honor that memory by continuing the struggle for justice.

Touching a piece of the past

Weighing in at 8,500 pounds, the new granite memorial with gold-leaf inscriptions took almost five years and $130,000 to become realized—but it wasn’t complete without the new bronze bust of Harry Bridges that is part of the monument. Southern California Pensioners commissioned the bust from renowned local sculptor Eugene Daub and designer Rob Firmin.

Harry Bridges’ son, Robbie, was on hand to mark the special occasion by graciously thanking everyone for honoring the 1934 martyrs and memoriaizing his father, who helped lead the strike that established the union that became the ILWU.

After the speakers finished, hundreds gathered around the memorial to pose for photos with their families. Many people couldn’t resist stepping forward to touch the granite and bronze sculpture, including David Schleibs, Deputy Secretary of the Victoria Branch of the Maritime Union of Australia, and his wife, Julie, who both made a special effort to attend the march and participate in the memorial ceremonies. Afterward, Local 13 invited the Schleibs and other special guests to a BBQ at Longshoremen’s Memorial Hall where chefs and longshoreman Mike Miller prepared a tasty lunch.

Al Perisho expressed gratitude to all of the pensioners, along with dozens of volunteers who came forward from Locals 13, 63, and 94, including Mike Piazza, Sal DiCostanzo, Victor Hudek, Patricia Aguirre, Mark Jurusc, Jimmy Monti, and many others.

“It took us almost five years to finish this project, and sometimes we felt like it was a race against time because the ‘34 strike veterans were going so fast,” said Perisho. “We recently lost Joe Stahl who lived to be 101, and now there’s just one remaining survivor that we know of—lulu Johnson—who’s living in Long Beach but wasn’t well enough to attend our event. So this memorial is now here and will remain behind when all of us are gone so that the next generations will understand how we got here and what kinds of sacrifices are sometimes necessary to make progress.”

A March to Remember: Hundreds of ILWU Local 13 members marched on May 13, proudly displaying the motto of the ILWU.

A Big Step Forward For Long Beach: In a contentious, nearly six-hour meeting on May 12, Long Beach City Council members voted unanimously to green-light the Port of Long Beach’s Middle Harbor Redevelopment Project. The $750-million, 10-year project will update two decades-old terminals on Piers D, E, and F and expand them into one modernized terminal (pictured), more than doubling the cargo capacity of the old terminals. Over 150 longshore workers and their families attended in support of the project, and Local 63 member and ILWU Port Liaison Dominick Miretti and Southern California District Council President Rich Dines presented testimony. “This is a victory for the community,” said Dines. “It addresses the underlying issues we’ve been facing for years—the congestion and the pollution.” Although environmental groups opposed the Middle Harbor Project, citing the inadequacy of the Environmental Impact Report, Dines is confident the development will be both successful and green. The project includes an extensive electrified on-dock railyard that will increase on-dock rail capacity at the new terminal, eventually replacing 1,000 truck trips per day from local highways. Environmental measures such as cold-ironing, low-sulfur fuels, electrified cargo-handling equipment and tougher air quality standards for switch locomotives will reduce air pollution by more than half from current levels. The Port estimates the project will create 14,000 permanent regional jobs as well as 1,000 much-needed construction jobs for the local community. “The Middle Harbor Project will create jobs so that our casuals can become registered and secure the future of the ILWU in Southern California,” said Dines, who called the project “a model for green growth in ports around the world.”
In Washington: Rite Aid warehouse worker Angel Warner went to Capitol Hill on May 20 to speak at a press conference on the Employee Free Choice Act, a bill that would make it easier for workers to join unions. “We like our jobs,” she told Congress, “we just want dignity, respect and a voice in our workplace. A person can only take so much—we decided it was time to stand up for ourselves.” Angel received a standing ovation from the audience after her remarks describing conditions at Rite Aid’s Lancaster, Calif. warehouse, where workers who voted to join the ILWU have been the targets of harassment, threats and intimidation by Rite Aid management. Also at the briefing was Cornell University labor expert Kate Bronfenbrenner, author of a new report which finds that employer opposition to workers’ efforts to form unions has intensified. “Employers are using an arsenal of legal and illegal tactics to interfere with workers trying to organize, and they are doing it with impunity,” Bronfenbrenner told lawmakers, urging them to support EFCA. Download a copy of the report at www.americanrightsatwork.org.

In Lancaster: Rite Aid workers started organizing in spring 2006. In March ’08 they voted in favor of joining the ILWU. Eight months later, the company illegally fired 50 workers and cut the hours of hundreds more. According to the Bronfenbrenner report, such attacks are standard practice among private sector employers seeking to thwart worker organizing efforts. Rite-Aid workers protested the illegal layoffs in front of the Lancaster distribution center in November ’08.

In San Diego: Local 29 members joined other labor and community supporters in front of Wal-Mart on April 9 to support the Employee Free Choice Act. Wal-Mart is one of the corporations vigorously lobbying to kill the bill. Home Depot and FedEx have also thrown their weight behind defeating the Free Choice Act. From left: Jeremy Edwards, Ernesto Collosi, Greg Bird, Alfonso Torres, Christine Torres, and Sergio Blanco. Fat Cat Lee Scott, CEO of Wal-Mart, provoked the demonstration.

Justice at the Beach: The pickets at Waikiki’s Pacific Beach Hotel got plenty of support during their April 29 - May 6 “Golden Week” demonstration against the union-busting company. Hotel owners have been trying to get rid of the union, but Local 142 has helped workers sustain a long-term struggle for justice. Local residents from across Oahu and members from more than a dozen unions showed up to show solidarity with the workers, and State lawmakers Senator Gary Hooser and Representatives Della Au Bellati, Roy Takumi, and Karen Akana walked the picket line on May 6. Picketers distributed several thousand leaflets about the boycott to the Japanese tourists who flock to the islands during Golden Week and make up the bulk of the hotel’s business. The Labor Board recently issued a ruling against the hotel, supporting workers and their union.

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The Golden Week Gang: ILWU affiliate American Radio Assoc. joined the Masters, Mates & Pilots union and the Marine Engineers union at the Pacific Beach Hotel boycott in Honolulu on April 30. From left: Dave Mori, ILWU Local 142 Oahu Division Director; Kelly Anderson, ARA; Adam Vokac, MEBA Port Rep; Carl Young, ARA Secretary-Treasurer; and Shane Ambrose, Local 142 Oahu Business Agent.

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Solidarity in Stockton: A group of Local 10 ‘B’ men traveled to Stockton on May 4 to support ILWU Local 54 and other unions that are fighting for good union jobs at the Port of Stockton. Local 54 leaders say most of the jobs at the port are low-wage positions that offer few benefits and are doing little to revive Stockton’s sagging local economy.

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Free Choice Act fight continues

Solidarity in Stockton: A group of Local 10 ‘B’ men little to revive Stockton’s sagging local economy. Of Stockton. Local 54 leaders say most of the jobs at the port other unions that are fighting for good union jobs at the Port traveled to Stockton on May 4 to support ILWU Local 54 and protested the illegal layoffs in front of the Lancaster distribution center in November ’08.

In Lancaster:

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Rite Aid workers and their union, the company has just agreed to law by not negotiating with workers who were laid off last year. The company broke the law by not negotiating with the union about the layoffs. In an important victory for Rite Aid workers and their union, the company has just agreed to

Going Dutch:

An ILWU international delegation to Amsterdam stood shoulder to shoulder with Dutch dockworkers in front of the hotel where insurance and pension giant Aegon held its stockholder meeting on April 22. The Dutch dockers union (FNV Bondgenoten), is involved in an ongoing dispute with Aegon, charging the multinational with looting the pension funds of 60,000 dockworkers. Niek Stam, National Secretary of the FNV Bondgenoten, thanked the ILWU for its support, calling the action “an important step in our interna-

We Will Not Be Divided:

A group of Local 10 ‘B’ men 4 to support ILWU Local 54 and for good union jobs at the Port say most of the jobs at the port offer few benefits and are doing nothing for the local economy.

An injury to one is an injury to all.

Members Speak Out

ILWU’s 34th Convention takes place June 8-12, 2009 in Seattle, Wash. We asked delegates to share their hopes for the union.

What would you like to see happen at the ILWU Convention?

“This is my first convention, so with the exception of what past convention delegates have told me I really don’t know what to expect. What I hope to see come out of the convention is some progressive action. Given the economic and political climate right now I think there are a lot of opportunities for organizing the unorganized and I’d like to see the ILWU be at the forefront of that. I’d like to see us push for the Employee Free Choice Act as much as we’re able, as well as a more functional health care system, because the working world is kind of crumbling around us right now. And then just for my own benefit I’m hoping to meet a lot of new people and make connections with people outside of Local 5, because I haven’t had that many opportunities to get to know the union outside of Portland.”

Tove Holmberg, Local 5
Portland, OR

“I’d like to see us focus on labor unity. We’re at a time in history where all of labor needs to unite and become a force in our country again, and the ILWU needs to be a leader in that effort — espe-

Randy Whitman, Local 23
Fife, WA

“I’m looking forward to all of us getting together at the convention and coming together as one union. Solidarity is important because morale can go down when there’s not much work, like now. This is the kind of situation that can lead to more in-house fighting, so it’s up to us to educate members about the impor-

Larry Manzo, Local 13
San Pedro, CA

“There’s been to Longshore Caucuses, but this will be my first Convention, so I’m looking forward to meeting delegates from other divisions of the ILWU. I look forward to seeing how our union’s democratic process brings rank and file delegates together to discuss and debate the issues facing the International and its divisions. The Conven-

Dan McKisson, Local 19
Seattle, WA

Tove Holmberg, Local 5
Portland, OR

“Breaking News!”

MEMBERS SPEAK OUT

We Will Not Be Divided:

David Crenshaw from Local 10 protests Stockton port officials’ plan to erect a fence that would isolate union workers from the rest of the port.

Going Dutch:

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DISPATCHER • JUNE 2009 5
Local 21 Blows the Whistle
Local 21 members picket a company they say is jeopardizing the community and the environment.

Washington’s Cowlitz County, which starts on the banks of the Columbia River and rises to the ridges of Mount St. Helens, was once known as the “Timber Capital of the World.” Today, most of that timber has been cut, and the traditional logging and manufacturing county is now known as the state’s leader in unemployment, which rose to 13.4 percent in April.

Local 21 longshore workers want to see the area rebound with good, family-wage jobs—so they’re blowing the whistle on an employer they say is taking advantage of the area’s struggling economy to exploit the land and people in crisis.

In 2004 Chinook Ventures bought the buildings on the site of the former Reynolds and Longview Aluminum smelters. (The land is owned by the global aluminum corporation Alcoa, Inc.) Since then the company has been cleaning up decades of contamination left by the aluminum company, with the aim of developing the 416-acre site into a private storage, shipping and transport facility.

“We started shedding light on Chinook Ventures’ business practices because local families need good jobs, a clean river and employers who are accountable,” said Dan Coffman, president of the local. “When people hear about how the company is operating, they agree that Cowlitz County deserves better.”

In April, Local 21 members who work at the Ports of Longview and Kalama organized an area standards picket at Chinook Ventures’ waterfront headquarters. More than 100 supporters from several area unions and organizations held signs that said, among other things, “Your children and grandchildren don’t deserve sub-standard wages and benefits.”

Every July, the ILWU commemorates the series of dramatic events that transformed the face of labor in the United States: Bloody Thursday and the great San Francisco General Strike. For this year’s 75th Anniversary, the Bay Area Longshoremen’s Memorial Assn. (BALMA), ILWU Locals 10, 34, 91, and 75, and ILWU Pensioners are hosting a full slate of events in San Francisco, including film screenings, historical reenactments, guided walks, art exhibits, conferences, and more. The main event, on Sunday, July 5, is the Bloody Thursday 75th Anniversary Procession and Celebration—a solemn tribute to, as the Chronicle described it in 1934, “a stupendous and reverent procession that astounded the city.” Gather at 9am at the Music Concourse (across from the Ferry Building) to take part in a procession up the Embarcadero to Local 10 Hall (301 Beach St, SF).

The following is a partial list of additional events. For more information and a complete schedule please visit www.ilwu10.org or call (415) 362-8852 or (415) 642-8066.

July 1 - Aug. 31: The Men Along the Shore and The Legacy of 1934; historical art exhibit about the origins of the ILWU, SF Main Library, 6th Floor. Reception Thurs, July 16; 5-7pm. SF Main Library, 6th Floor (100 Larkin St, SF).

Fri, July 3: 1934 SF General Strike History & Educational Conference; 9am; Marine Firemen’s Hall (240 Second St, SF).

Mon, July 6: International Labor Conference, 9am-5pm; ILWU Local 34 Hall; International Labor Solidarity Night, unions should prepare to lead a song to sing! 4pm-9pm, ILWU Local 34 Hall (801 Second St, SF).

Sat, Aug. 1: We Are The ILWU, The Eye of The Storm and May Day 2008; film screenings, 2-5pm; SF Main Library, 6th Floor (100 Larkin St, SF).

Sat, Aug. 22: Solidarity Stories: An Oral History of the ILWU; book signing by Harvey Schwartz, ILWU historian; followed by film premiere of Bloody Thursday. 2-5pm, SF Main Library, 6th Floor (100 Larkin St, SF).

Local 21 longshore workers start at $29.04 per hour, and Chinook Ventures owner Barry Oliver told the Daily News that his lowest-paid employees start at about $16 per hour, though he didn’t specify whether those wages were for longshore work.

“Our county officials seem too eager to settle for low-wage jobs,” said Coffman. “But that starts a race to the bottom that our community can’t afford. If we want our young people to stick around, we need to build family wage jobs with benefits and a future right here.”

Local 21 is also concerned about Chinook Ventures’ many documented violations of air and water pollution. Chinook Ventures claims it is cleaning and restoring the waterfront site, but the company’s documented violations against water quality standards during a 2007 inspection painted a picture of anything but a cleanup.

The Washington Department of Ecology cited the company for storing waste materials outside with inadequate pollution prevention controls, spilling product on the ground during loading and unloading operations; tracking hazardous materials throughout the site, and using poor housekeeping practices on-site and at the pier. This spring, the Department of Ecology fined the company $150,000; one of the largest fines the state has levied in years. Chinook Ventures is appealing the penalty.

Laurie Davies of the Washington Department of Ecology told the Daily News that, “By ignoring state and local permitting requirements, this company is putting people and the environment at risk—as well as creating an unfair advantage over business competitors who follow the law and permit requirements.

Several residents and organizations are joining the effort to hold Chinook Ventures to higher standards, including Columbia Riverkeeper, an environmental organization that monitors pollution along the region’s rivers. The group’s Conservation Director, Dan Serres, told the Daily News, “This is supposed to be a cleanup site, and it doesn’t appear they’re doing that.”

Coffman said that local longshore workers love the region and are happy to see the broad support for holding the company accountable for how it treats workers and the environment.

“We’ll work on this for as long as it takes to improve things for our community,” he said.

Risky Venture: Local 21 members Robert Roden, Jake Ford, Chris Hultyer and Jason Davis are bringing public attention to the business practices of Chinook Ventures, a company operating on a private dock in Longview, Wash.

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Unleash Laws: ILWU members, concerned community leaders, and their furry friends have picketed Chinook Ventures for paying its employees low wages and violating several environmental safety laws.
Harry Bridges, the West Coast’s most famous labor leader, begins with the story of the 1934 waterfront strike. While the history is familiar to many labor activists and ILWU members, what’s unique is Bridges’ voice. He doesn’t talk like a “labor statesman.” He calls a spade a spade: When the interview took place, employers and politicians tried to treat him as one. But while he was in office, he explained, “I’d always feel that the ones that direct everything is the rank and file. And I’m its spokesperson, that’s all. The rank and file is the power of the union, see. They’re the ones that can shut things down.”

“Shouting things down”—the capacity to act on the job, to withdraw labor in an effective way—is key to building a union. Without the 1934 maritime strike, and those three days in San Francisco during the General Strike when nothing moved without the workers’ permission, the union would never have gained the power it needed to make radical changes. And that was the goal. Not just any sort of agreement to disburse funds and accept a contract, but rather to create a rebellious, radical union.

Bridges describes those beginning demands. “We went to our rank and file convention that February,” he recalls of the months before the strike. “We drew up a set of demands and presented them with a promise to set up committees, to negotiate, and, if necessary, to strike. Our demands were for a six-hour, day wage increase, and union hiring halls. So we set up a contract, and then we set up a negotiating committee.”

As Sam Kagel, a union organizer who later became the powerful coastwide longshore industry arbitrator, recalls, they made one other crucial demand. “Once the ‘34 strike began, and the other maritime unions went on strike as well, the longshoremen expanded their original demands to include the requirement of a settlement for everyone.”

Without solidarity all along the waterfront, all along the coast, the strike would have been lost, and the unions crushed. In Solidarity Stories, strikers describe how they held out for a coastwide agreement for all workers, when some might have readily agreed to local settlements.

Organizing Then and Now

These are not just past controversies—they are the crucial issues for labor’s future today. Some advocates of an old school approach say setting up committees of workers is unnecessary and slow. They argue that workers in a single workplace can’t see the bigger picture and put their selfish interests above the larger interests of the union as a whole.

Longshore, transport and warehousing have changed beyond recognition, but modern ILWU organizing campaigns are based on the same ideas; help workers organize on the job and build an organization they can be proud of. They are not, as in the past, at RiteAid’s huge Lancaster warehouse, decided when to hold (and win) their union election. Mary Wining, a rank-and-file leader who played an important role in organizing workers at Powell’s Books in Portland, says she and her coworkers chose the ILWU for its democratic practices. “Some of our group had looked into the history of the ILWU and learned about its militancy and support for different causes.” They arranged a meeting with an ILWU organizer and after listening to what he had to say they signed cards that night.

The institutions born in 1934 made it possible to balance local with union-wide needs, and democracy with centralized bargaining with all shipping employers on the coast. Today even the smallest longshore locals elect delegates to the longshore caucus and pass resolutions on bargaining demands. Those delegates batch out a common program, elect the bargaining committee, and sit down with employers. Any agreement must be ratified by vote.

By Harvey Schwartz
University of Washington Press, 2009

BOOK REVIEW

Keeping Solidarity Alive

This book takes a back- ward glance at the ILWU’s organizing history—and issues a wake-up call for today’s labor movement.

By David Bacon

T he labor movement seems to have lost its way. Today only 12 percent of American workers (and only 7 percent in the private sector) belong to unions, the lowest level of organization since the years before the great longshore strike of 1934. And falling numbers don’t tell the whole story. Some labor leaders now say that only huge deals at the top, far from the control of rank and file workers, can bring in new members on the scale needed. To make these deals attractive to employers, they argue, unions have to be willing to make deep concessions in wages and rights, and in our political demands on everything from single-payer health care to immigration reform.

We need some better ideas about how to organize and use their power.

New PENSIONERS:

Local 8: Stephen W. Hanson; Local 10: George F. Bell, Richard I. Ross, Charles H. Devine; Local 11: Carl E. Brown; Felix Mendola; Enoch Nixon; Robert H. Caughlin; Leonard Graham Jr; Robert McKenna; Arthur G. Rand; Charles A. Anderson; Local 13: Carl E. Brown; Felix Mendola; Enoch Nixon; Robert H. Caughlin; Leonard Graham Jr; Robert McKenna; Arthur G. Rand; Charles A. Anderson; Local 19: John B. Williams; Local 34: Enoch Nixon; Thomas H. Thompson; Local 21: Michael R. Caso; Phillip N. Acosta; Richard E. Meikle; Jimmy C. Davenport; Richard A. Rodriguez; Paul R. Brown; Randy M. Robertson; Walter S. Hollingsworth; Fred Rodriguez; Paul R. Brown; Harry M. Meikle; Jimmy C. Davenport; Richard Nervik; John Truant; Tony Nuno; Anthony Raquel; John E. Lawler; Anthony Wells; Robert O’Conner; Lary Taylor; Local 53: Arthur G. Walters

DECEASED SURVIVORS:

Local 8: Violet Krimser; Irma E. Evers; Local 10: Cornelia Cabral; Edna B. Leslie; Local 11: Elizabeth Seelig; Mary Oreb; Joann James; Local 13: Martha E. Sullivan; Mesa Harkins; Local 19: Margaret L. Wittmier; Julia A. Tekamp; Audrey Doremos; Local 21: Deborah-Ann; Local 23: katrlyn Halko; Edna B. Lee; Local 34: Elizabeth Seelig; Local 34: Gladys I. Hoff; Bonita B. Jones; Local 63: Louise K. Kuhn
Keeping Solidarity Alive
continued from page 7

Lessons Of the Past

Harvey Schwartz’s courageous oral history are loyal to the real history of the union. “Down through the years,” recalls Jack Olsen, “the ILWU had been a refuge for radicals who were run out of every place else. As a result of the policy to protect everybody regardless of political affiliation, many were able to get work...to me that’s why the ILWU was always a radical organization.”

All along the coast the ILWU had a close and complicated relationship with radicals, not just in big cities and the islands, but also in tiny coast towns like North Bend, Oregon. “Around 1950 some people started calling us ‘reds,’ but that was something you had to get used to,” remembers Valerie Taylor, who organized the Women’s Auxiliary there. “The FBI knocked on your door every few months.”

The name ‘left-winger’ stayed attached to me. “I was certainly the ILWU. I was on all the picket lines. Whenever I’m around town, I still join em...Somewhere has to do these things. I was certainly never by myself.”

The union also fought the prohibition of the ILWU. “Down through the years,” recalls Jack Olsen, “the ILWU has been a refuge for radicals regardless of political affiliation.”

The book provides a detailed and comprehensive history of the ILWU, including its struggle for workers’ rights and its role in the labor movement. It highlights the contributions of important figures such as Harry Bridges, whose life and legacy are celebrated in the ILWU’s annual memorial service. The book also includes a variety of resources and contacts, including a list of books and videos available through the ILWU library.

The ILWU’s longshore division is highlighted, with information on how to order books and videos from the organization. The book review encourages readers to learn more about the ILWU’s history and to support its activities.

ILWU BOOKS & VIDEOS

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

**BOOKS**
- **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 (paper)
- **Along the Shore/Port o’ The Coast—ILWU Coloring Book.** A bilingual 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 produced 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 1934 strike and an account of the extraordinary sacrifices and democratic principles of the founding members of the ILWU. Two (2) for $5.00

**Harry Bridges:** The Rise and Fall of Radical Labor in the United States. By Charles Larrabee. A limited edition of this out-of-print and useful biography are now available through the book sale by special arrangement with Belknap 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’s origins from 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 Wolffram. The important new study of longshoreing in the ILWU. $20.00 (paperback)

**A Terrible Anger:** The 1934 Waterfront and General Strike in San Francisco. By David Selvin. Perhaps the most comprehensive single narrative about the San Francisco events of 1934. $16.50

**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 campaigns 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 directed and produced by Annie Williams. The film 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., memoirs of 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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