As we celebrate the holidays and get ready for the New Year, we hope you’ll take a few moments to reflect on our work in 2008.

On behalf of the ILWU International officers and staff, we wish you and your family a peaceful and joyous holiday season.

JANUARY

Hundreds of events happened in the ILWU world during 2008. These are some of the highlights, as reported in The Dispatcher.

Dozens of Local 29 workers at Harborside Refrigerated Services in San Diego had already been on the picket line for more than a month when the New Year started. They won their fight for a better contract in early 2008, thanks to solidarity from co-workers on the docks and support from other workers in the community who were organized by the San Diego Labor Council. Picket lines went up just after Thanksgiving and continued through Christmas, and the San Diego Chargers playoff games. Not a single worker crossed the line. Their unity allowed them to win most of their demands— including controls on an abusive hiring system that cheated warehouse workers out of permanent jobs and health benefits.

That issue over longtime temps without benefits sparked the strike after longtime worker Efren Montes, Sr., died without health insurance despite having worked for seven years at Harborside. Workers also won their first raise in six years, and an agreement to assign work by seniority.

“Before the strike, we were divided,” said Harborside worker James “Bo” Bellina. “But during the strike, we put things from the past aside. We learned if we strike together we can accomplish great things.”

FEBRUARY

ILWU’s Longshore Caucus met in San Francisco during the last week of January and first week of February to hammer out a negotiating approach for the new contract covering more than 25,000 dockworkers. Over 100 delegates elected by the rank-and-file attended, debated, and ultimately agreed on a package of proposals to guide the negotiating process in the months ahead. Among the many resolutions passed was one introduced
Dear Editor,

This time, why not let the oil companies bail out the big three automakers? These two have worked hand and hand all these years.

Some are blaming the autoworkers for the decent wages, health benefits, and pensions that they fought hard to win over many years of contract negotiations. They weren’t a gift from the big three.

The reason why the big three need a bailout now has more to do with the fact that the companies never took responsibility for building smaller, better, more fuel-efficient cars that we need in this country. The incompetent CEO’s are taking home salaries equal to hundreds or even thousands of men and women who work hard on the line building these vehicles.

Michael Mullen, Pensioner’s Club, Local 14
Eureka, CA 95501

Dear Editor,

I retired on October 1, 2004 after 41 years on the waterfront. A lot of my brothers wanted to know how it feels to be retired. It’s hard to answer that question unless you’ve been retired for awhile, but now after four years I can honestly say it feels great! My wife and I have done a lot of travelling. We spend time with our children and grandchildren. I want to thank the ILWU for making it all possible. I also want to thank all my union brothers in Locals 13, 63, and 94 for their support during all of my 41 years.

I just hope that every member of retirement age will retire, spend time with their families, enjoy life, and do things that that they never have done. Every member deserves to have some fun years instead of just working. I had so many friends that never made retirement, and that is tragic.

Congratulations to you and the staff for the great work you have done on the Dispatcher.

Henry Sedillos, Jr.
Buena Park, CA

Send your letters to the editor to: The Dispatcher, 1188 Franklin St., San Francisco, CA 94110-6800 or email to editor@ilwu.org
by Local 10 delegates that, as amended, called for coastwise stop-work meetings on May 1st to support U.S. troops in Iraq by bringing them home safely. Delegates also elected a 15-member Negotiating Committee and 8-member Safety Negotiating Committee. ILWU long-timers noted that this meeting was more united and less factional than previous Caucus gatherings.

“Everyone at the Caucus was trying to address issues and solve problems,” said Jennifer Gumm, a first-time delegate from Local 12 in Coos Bay, Oregon. “The debates were intense, but almost always respectful. I was impressed with the process and all the unity in the room, even when there were disagreements.”

MARCH

Two years of tough organizing resulted in a win for 650 warehouse workers at Rite Aid’s million-square-foot distribution center in Lancaster, CA, who voted to join the ILWU on March 14, 2008. Workers in the high-desert facility receive container loads of merchandise from the Ports of LA and Long Beach which they distribute to 500 Rite Aid stores throughout the Southwest. Like most workers who want to join a union, Rite Aid workers faced an almost impossible barrage of anti-union propaganda and attacks. Workers were fired for supporting the union, including Ignacio “Nacho” Luna, who explained, “We showed that if we stand together, we can make changes for ourselves, our families, and the people who come after us.” Nacho was finally rehired after six months, but his termination increased the fear among many workers, which is why employers usually fire union supporters during union organizing campaigns, and why passing the Employee Free Choice Act in Congress remains so important.

Rite Aid workers at the Lancaster distribution center won their union vote last March with help from ILWU volunteers at Locals 13, 26, 30, 63 OCU and 63. Activists from other unions also helped including the Teamsters.

April

Another tragic death on the docks in early April highlighted the deadly side of longshore work. Carlos Rivera was a longtime and well-known longshoreman who was killed while working on the job in Long Beach on April 4th. More than a dozen longshore workers had been killed in the previous six years, making longshoring a more dangerous occupation than working as a police officer or firefighter. ILWU’s Coast Negotiating Committee was raising the issue at the negotiating table and pushing for stronger Safety Code language.

Hundreds of ILWU members joined thousands of other union activists to kick off a three-day “Hollywood to the Docks” march that began on April 15th to highlight all the different union contracts expiring in the Southland in 2008 that cover 350,000 workers. ILWU members made up the largest contingent of walkers who marched the full 28 miles. A rally at the San Pedro docks concluded the event.

“We showed that if we stand together, we can make changes for ourselves, our families, and the people who come after us.”

– Ignacio ‘Nacho’ Meza, Rite Aid distribution center, Lancaster, CA

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MAY

Ports closed up and down the coast on May Day when nearly 10,000 longshore workers voluntarily gave up a day’s pay to protest the war in Iraq, support the troops, and call for their safe return. Large public protests were organized in Seattle by Local 19 and in San Francisco by Local 10. Smaller actions were held in Tacoma, Portland and Stockton. Hundreds of unsolicited “thank you” letters poured into the ILWU headquarters, including many from families with current and former members in the military. The media coverage was extensive and positive with reports in the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Los Angeles Times, and dozens of other outlets.

JUNE

The Coast Longshore Negotiating Committee reached a preliminary agreement with ILWU employers represented by the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) that maintained health and welfare benefits. The remainder of the contract was still being negotiated, but the announcement on June 17th of a tentative agreement which preserved health and welfare benefits was taken as a positive sign by the media, and industry observers that contract talks were on-track and moving in the right direction. Negotiations would require five more weeks of difficult bargaining to resolve the remaining issues.

JULY

Preliminary agreement on a new 6-year longshore contract covering 25,000 workers was reached on July 28th, four weeks after the previous contract expired. The Negotiating Committee declined to extend the old agreement when it expired on July 1st, and when further progress was elusive, workers at the major ports in California and began taking “unit breaks” to show their unity and determination to win a fair agreement which came after several weeks of measured, disciplined action. Respect for the ILWU’s democratic process required the agreement to be carefully evaluated by Coast Caucus delegates in August, followed by open discussions at local membership meetings, then voted on by Longshore Division members in September. The agreement was ratified by a 75% margin.

AUGUST

Emergency response workers in Tacoma who protect the waters of Puget Sound went on strike the week of August 18th to protest discrimination by their employer, the Marine Spill Response Corporation (MSRC). Support on the picket line included Local 23 longshore workers and supporters from the local Jobs with Justice chapter. National Labor Relations Board officials in Seattle issued complaints against MSRC for coercing and discriminating against employees. In addition to these labor law violations, MSRC had also been dragging their feet on a new contract for workers in Tacoma and Long Beach. Shortly after the strike ended, the company began working seriously with the Inlandboatmen’s Union (IBU) on a contract settlement. Workers soon won a first contract with raises and pay up to $32 an hour, a grievance and arbitration procedure, maintenance of health benefits, and a union security clause.

“...the environment is our number one concern.”
– Klete Freudenstein, MSRC worker, Tacoma, WA
With the arrival of Labor Day, election season went into high gear and the ILWU kicked off a campaign to educate members, mobilize volunteers, and hold politicians more accountable. The goal was to elect representatives and a new president who would stand up for working families. ILWU’s International Executive Board carefully reviewed the records and positions of all the candidates earlier in the year. In April, the Executive Board unanimously agreed that Senator Barack Obama was the best candidate for working families. Important local, regional and state elections were motivating locals to take politics seriously, including Locals 54 and 6 which spent more than a year preparing to elect a Mayor and City Council members in Stockton who would be more friendly to working families. In San Diego, Local 29 members geared up to fight a local developer who wanted to convert their port into what one member described as a “Disneyland development.”

Hundreds of ILWU volunteers were pushing hard in the final weeks of the campaign to make phone calls, walk precincts, and talk with other union members about the most important election in decades. These high stakes were behind the ILWU’s decision to send 50 members to join other union members in nearby “swing states” where the Presidential and U.S. Senate races were expected to be close and decisive: Alaska, New Mexico, Colorado, Oregon and Nevada.

ILWU members helped make history on November 4th when Barack Obama was elected President of the United States. There were also important U.S. Senate victories in Alaska, Oregon, New Mexico and Colorado. At the state and local level, members helped re-elect a friend of working families, Christine Gregoire as Governor of Washington State, and defeat a slew of anti-union measures in Oregon and Colorado. The developer-sponsored initiative to destroy San Diego’s port was crushed, and Stockton voters elected a Mayor and City Council expected to be more friendly to working families.

“...the men and women of the ILWU, and working people across this country, deserve a president who doesn’t choke on the word “union” and is willing to fight for the right to organize...”

– Barack Obama
Local 6 members who provide alcohol and drug rehabilitation services at San Francisco’s Mission Canyon are struggling against unresponsive management and a state and local budget crisis that is squeezing their program hard. San Francisco’s $300 million budget deficit is forcing cuts to drug and alcohol treatment programs, mental health, and medical services. “It’s a terrible time to be negotiating,” said Local 6 Secretary-Treasurer Fred Pecker, “but we won’t back down from these demands.”

The low work should be paid fairly and treated decently, according to local leaders. “Workers are feeling threatened with losing their jobs,” said President Damien Mooney. “The experience at Blue Diamond shows us that bad faith bargaining can only make things worse. We hope to fill them with urgently needed supply...”

Local 12 members are encouraged by the Port of Coss Bay’s decision to purchase the 111-mile long Coss Bay rail line that connects the bay to the inland city of Eugene. The federal government’s asking price was higher than expected, at $16.8 million, and the Port is appealing that amount as it moves forward. Local 12 Secretary-Treasurer Jennifer Gumm said, “This purchase is good news for us. It shows signs that the Port is looking for economic development opportunities for our community.” If the Port had not agreed to the purchase, the rail line would have been abandoned, cutting rural Coss Bay off from critical transportation routes.

Local 13 member Vivian Malauulu gave birth to a beautiful 9 pound, 4 ounce baby boy on October 6th, named Koa George. The postcard announcement sent by Vivian and husband George promises this will be the last baby! Local 13 member and Health Benefits Officer Jerry Arda got his family members involved in purchasing and delivering turkeys and other food items to local families who are hurting this holiday season. Longtime activist, former Local 13 President, and former ILWU International President Dave Aran has formally announced his retirement. He’ll attend his last local meeting as a member on Thursday, December 4th. A party in Dave’s honor is set for Saturday, January 24th at the Port Town Café in San Pedro. For more information, contact Norm or Patricia Tack noshes@cox.net.

Local 14 members are hopeful after a November 14th vote by the Eureka Harbor Commission to authorize an Environmental Impact Review (EIR) to assess the impact of upgrading their existing facilities to include cruise ship, break bulk and short-sea shipping terminals. Local 14 members think this may lead to future development of the terminal into a full container facility, pending extension of a rail line. President Damon Money says the terminal conversion would increase local employment which has suffered since the local pulp mill was closed by owners over fears for 3-6 months, or until the global economy begins to recover.

Local 19 had their bus cruise season ever in 2008 at the Port of Seattle. For the first time, Seattle surpassed Vancouver B.C. in passenger numbers. Seattle welcomed 210 cruise ships and 868,039 passengers while Vancouver welcomed 214 cruise ships and 894,959 passengers. The cruise business in Seattle generates $274 million in annual business revenue, $8 million in annual state and local taxes, and 2,380 jobs. The 2009 season will see the opening of a new facility on Pier 91, near the Magnolia Bridge. Current projections for 2009 estimate there will be 211 cruise ship visits and 891,080 passengers, with the Port serving as home for 11 vessels... The Port Commissions of Seattle and Tacoma met recently in a joint session for the second time this year in an effort to forge better cooperation on infrastructure, regional promotion and environmental issues.

Local 21 stands to gain about 50 jobs if the Port of Longview is able to secure the 6.4 acres of land necessary to build a $150 million grain terminal. Kalaama-based RSG Forest Products Inc. owns the land and says it wants to build...
Some text here...
A Helping Hand...

...when you need it most. That’s what we’re all about. We are the representatives of the ILWU-sponsored recovery programs. We provide professional and confidential assistance to you and your family for alcoholism, drug abuse and other problems—and we’re just a phone call away.

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 Zalzburg: 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 Producing as a catalogue to accompany the new traveling historical art exhibit about the origins of the ILWU in the

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