Coast Negotiating Committee announces a preliminary contract agreement; the legacy of struggle born on “Bloody Thursday” continues

As the Dispatcher goes to press, ILWU’s Coast Negotiating and Safety Committees have reached a preliminary agreement with employers from the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) on a new contract covering 25,000 Longshore Division workers coastwide. Owing to the ILWU’s tradition of democratic process and rank-and-file oversight, the following procedures will be observed:

The Longshore Division Caucus, composed of democratically-elected delegates, will convene in San Francisco on August 18th to carefully review the proposed agreement. The Caucus will decide whether to recommend that the proposal be presented directly to the rank-and-file for consideration and a vote.

If the Caucus approves, the complete text of the proposed agreement will be mailed to each member’s home along with bulk copies to Longshore Division locals. Secret ballot elections will then be scheduled. If approved by members, the new contract becomes effective immediately.

The Committee thanks all Longshore Division workers for the many expressions of unity and solidarity by the rank-and-file that have sustained this contract fight – and honored the sacrifice of those who came before us. It was in that spirit that thousands of longshore workers and family members gathered on Saturday, July 5th, for events up and down the coast to honor the pair of union activists who were slain 74 years ago by San Francisco police during the historic waterfront strike that gave rise to today’s ILWU.

Hundreds of members from Locals 6, 10, and 34 gathered for an all-day celebration in San Francisco that began in front of Local 10’s dispatch hall where volunteers used chalk to outline the bodies of Howard Sperry and Nicholas Bordoise, creating a sidewalk shrine to honor the long-fallen union martyrs that attracted attention from curious tourists and news photographers. A brief ceremony opened with a mournful version of “taps” played by “Indian Joe” Morris followed by the presentation of colors from Local 10’s Drill Team led by Captain Josh Williams. Master of Ceremonies for the event was Joe Mosley, President of the Bay Area Pensioners. The ILWU’s newest generation was represented by seven-year-old Adiyah Washington, who sang the Star Spangled Banner. Edna Cambell, her mother and a Local 10 member, told the San Francisco Chronicle that her daughter volunteered to sing in order to continue the family’s tradition of union involvement. “She wanted to be a part of this,” Cambell said about her daughter. “The solidarity that continued on page 10

on July 5th, dockworkers up and down the coast gathered to honor their brothers who died in 1934 fighting for a longshore union. This sidewalk memorial was created by ILWU members in the San Francisco Bay Area in front of the Local 10 dispatch hall.
Dear Editor,

On May 6 at lunchtime, port trucks put up a picket line at the truckers’ gate of the SSA terminal in Oakland where I was working. I left the terminal, called the dispatcher and BA to say I was honoring the picket line, urging the union to pull all ILWU members out of the terminal, and then joined some 200+ strikers up the road where police had moved them. I was told by a union official that because they aren’t unionized, it is ILWU policy that picketing truckers don’t constitute a “bona fide” picket line. This is contrary to what “The ILWU Story” declares: “Every picket line must be respected as though it were our own.” Our strike in 1934 was not “authorized” but seamens and other unionists honored our picket lines and we won union recognition and the hiring hall.

In my view, the survival of the ILWU depends on our union as a whole fighting to help organize the thousands of low-wage, non-union workers in the cargo chain, the closest links being the seamen and the mainly immigrant-derived port truckers currently working with us on the docks. The ILWU now stands isolated as one of the few union links in the massive flow of commodities across the Pacific and inland – from nominally unionized production workers in China, to non-union seamens and port truckers, to weakly organized low-paid intermodal workers and legally strait-jacketed rail unions, to the ever increasing non-union warehouses and distribution centers. Winning ILWU-scale wages, benefits and union organization and rights for the existing trucker workforce would be a big step forward for the working class as a whole and would strengthen our union by providing us with a powerful ally in our struggles against the shippers and stevedoring companies. For a waterfront that is 100% union!

Barbara Franck, Local 10
Alameda, CA

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Dear Editor,

I am a long-time employee of the Port of Astoria who wishes to give a big “thank you” and long overdue recognition to the members of ILWU Local 50.

I don’t think many in the community are aware that ILWU members have voluntarily tied up Rose Festival and Astoria Regatta ships calling at the Port of Astoria for many years. They receive no pay for providing tie-up crews, and also let the lines go when the ships are ready to depart. They do it professionally, with smiles on their faces.

I am writing to advise the Dispatcher of Sally R. Parker’s death on May 20, 2008. She was the wife of Local 13 member (deceased) Louie Parker (30553) for 64 years.

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Dear Editor,

I just received a copy of the June Dispatcher with terrific coverage of May Day. The page of support letters were brilliant and powerful. Your May Day member actions inspired an outpouring of support across the country, throughout the labor, antiwar, and progressive movements. The ILWU has remained true to its vision, principles and history of leadership on every progressive front on which working people struggle. We commend the members and leadership for staying true to the Coast Caucus decision and the principles of solidarity on which it was founded.

I was disappointed, however, that the powerful message of solidarity from the Iraqi oil workers, which I read on their behalf at the SF rally, was not included in the Dispatcher. I hope you will make it available to union members. News of the ILWU May Day action was a huge lift for the embattled labor movement of Iraq. Unions there publicized it widely and are deeply appreciative of the level of solidarity demonstrated by ILWU members.

We are posting the June issue of the Dispatcher on our website and will send it to all USLAW affiliates.

Michael Eisenscher, National Coordinator
U.S. Labor Against the War
Oakland, CA

Dear Editor,

I just wanted to say “thank you” to ILWU members for supporting Laborfest in San Francisco this summer (July 5-31 www.laborfest.net). As a working class trades person (Boilermaker Local 146 in Canada) and musician, your support of the Laborfest 2008 International Working Class Film & Video Festival is greatly appreciated.

In Solidarity,

Chris Campbell
Parksville, British Columbia, Canada

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Dear Editor,

I’m writing to advise the Dispatcher of Sally R. Parker’s death on May 20, 2008. She was the wife of Local 13 member (deceased) Louie Parker (30553) for 64 years.

I want to thank the Dispatcher for continuing to advise us all of not only the members who have passed but also their spouses. It is very respectful and appreciated.

In this economy and job market, having a union job is a blessing and should not be taken for granted. Let’s keep jobs in the USA and keep Americans working by standing side by side to support our union! On behalf of everyone in my family, thank you

Kimberly Word
San Pedro, CA

(If you knew Louise Parker at Local 13, daughter of Robert Word at Local 13, mother of Trevor Word at Local 13, and sister to Tina Word at Local 63)

Supporting the troops: Vickie Kinner from Local 13 has been sending dozens of “care packages” to soldiers in Iraq since the war started. “I know how much it means to get a package when you’re deployed overseas,” says Kinner who served 11 years in the Navy plus a year in the Reserves. “Someone’s personal views about the war shouldn’t prevent them from sending a package to a soldier.” Kinner encourages others to join her, and suggests using the free service at www.anysoldier.com.

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The Dispatcher (ISSN 1052-3785) is published monthly except for a combined July/August issue, for $5.00 a year and $10.00 a year for non-members by the ILWU, 1188 Franklin St., San Francisco, CA 94109. Periodical postage paid at San Francisco, CA. The Dispatcher welcomes letters, photos and other submissions to the above address. © ILWU, 2008

The ILWU Story” declares: “Every picket line must be respected as though it were our own.”
ILWU will help gather one million signatures to end union-busting

**Employee Free Choice Act Aims to Rebuild the Middle Class**

Members at Locals 8 and 40 in Portland are some of the first to join a new nationwide campaign that the ILWU and other unions are launching to collect a million signatures to support the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) – a law that would make it much easier for workers to join a union.

“Passing the Employee Free Choice Act is a matter of life or death for the union movement and survival of the middle class,” said ILWU Vice President Joe Radisch, who’s helping to coordinate the campaign within the ILWU. “If laws aren’t changed soon, unions could become extinct by the next generation.”

Portland members locked-off the signature-gathering effort at their Bloody Thursday picnic on July 5th. Members at the picnic were encouraged to sign the petition, and take some home to get signatures from family, friends, and co-workers on the job.

“Employers today aren’t using police bullets and tear gas like they did against longshore workers in 1934,” said Local 8 President Jeff Smith who spoke to the union families who gathered at Oaks Park. “But employers still hate unions, they spend over a billion dollars a year on consultants to bust unions – and the law lets them get away with firing and harassing union supporters. We need to close those loopholes and give workers back their rights.”

Workers at the Rite Aid warehouse in Lancaster and the Blue Diamond almond plant in Sacramento know how difficult it is to join a union these days without protection from the Employee Free Choice Act.

“We suffered through some anti-union attacks that were just terrible,” said a woman who works in the Receiving Department at the Rite Aid warehouse. “All of us were threatened, and some of us – including me – were fired. In the end, we overcame those attacks and feel strong now, but they tried to make us suffer for supporting the union.”

Blue Diamond workers know that feeling well – their employer has been attacking union supporters inside the Sacramento plant for more than a decade. “This company fires some of my co-workers for supporting the union, and they tried to fire me too,” said Cesario Aguirre, a 30-year vet- eran maintenance worker at the plant. “Those firings really put fear in some of my co-workers, but now I see much more support.”

Blue Diamond workers are continuing to push for a fair and free election at their plant.

Strategy behind the signature drive

The million-member petition drive is designed to do some frightening facts about labor law reform in the political world:

- The Employee Free Choice Act has stalled in Congress because it’s just a few votes short of overcoming a filibuster in the Senate. The House of Representatives already passed EFCA last year.
- Republican nominee Sen. John McCain stands with Presidents George W. Bush – both oppose EFCA. McCain voted to block EFCA in the Senate, and promised to veto the bill if he wins.
- Democratic nominee Sen. Barack Obama supports the EFCA and has promised to help pass it if he’s elected. Pres. Bill Clinton made a similar promise, then devoted his time and energy to pass the NAFTA free trade deal with Mexico to benefit corporate America – even though unions were strongly opposed by unions, including the ILWU.

The way out of this problem, according to Radisch, is to “start earlier and do a better job of holding politicians accountable.”

Obama says the million-member petition drive will begin with union members who volunteer their time and money to help get politicians elected, then fired candidates. Many politicians, including Barack Obama, can stand up to corporate America unless we’re there to help them stand up for working families and pass the EFCA,” said Radisch.

ILWU members who gather petition signatures will be joining members from dozens of other unions across the country who are also signing-up friends, family and co-workers. The AFL-CIO plans to gather one million signatures by this fall, then present the petitions to President Obama and push hard to make the Employee Free Choice Act a top priority in his administration.

G

rain Services Union, ILWU Canada workers at the head office of Viterra Inc. in Regina, Saskatchewan are still locked out and on strike as we go to press. Nearly 90 percent of the 200 workers turned out to vote down the company’s final offer on June 9 by an 83 percent margin. Viterra, Canada’s largest grain and agribusiness company, handles and markets grain for domestic and export purposes. Their contract expired Jan. 31.

“Members had authorized strike action rather than submit to Viterra’s lockout conditions,” GSU General Secretary Hugh Wagner said. The employer ordered employees to report to work or be subject to discipline without the rights and protections a contract. So on July 7, GSU members walked.

The following day a delivery driver “got frustrated and went roaring across the lot,” Wagner said. “He hit a picket and knocked him down.” The worker wasn’t seriously injured and the police are investigating.

The company can hardly cry poverty. Thanks to the tremendous increase in food prices, Viterra has seen second quarter operating revenues increase nearly 300 percent this year to $1.5 billion. Despite its good fortune, the company wants the power to change group insurance plans at will, increase the use of temporary workers, and impose variable work hours without guarantees of full-time employment. The media has inaccurately reported the company’s wage offer as “up to 27 percent over five years.” But the company would decide who—if anyone—gets the raise. “This violates the very essence of the collective bargaining process,” Wagner said.

“We’ve been carefully watching Viterra’s attempts to break the union, said Larry Hshbuch, President of Saskatchewan’s Labour. “Viterra isn’t respecting the collective bargaining relationship with their workers that’s been in place for 70 years.”

The union filed an unfair labor practice charge on July 18th, saying that the lockout is illegal. Viterra failed to respond, so the union is hoping to win a favorable ruling and get the company back into negotiations.

ILWU Canada President Tom Dufresne presented GSU’s strike fund with a $100,000 check at a large rally in Regina July 24. International Secretary-Treasurer Mike Adams sent greetings that were read at the rally.

“As the grain ripens in the fields, the employer would impose impossible conditions on union workers,” Adams said. “People are hungry all over the world, yet Viterra provokes a lockout and strike. They must be thinking of their own huge salaries. They disregard the worth of their own people and the people around the world who see the grain as food, not a commodity.”

— Jennifer Sargent

Local 8 member Allen McNamee reads the Employee Free Choice Act petition at his hiring hall. McNamee took a petition home to gather signatures from friends and family. He’s supporting efforts by the ILWU and AFL-CIO unions to deliver one million signatures supporting the Employee Free Choice Act to America’s next President.

— Tom Price

DISPATCHER • July/August 2008 3
Electric trucks could save gas, protect workers and residents in the Southland

With gas prices soaring toward $5.00 a gallon and diesel already higher, West Coast port officials have plenty of incentive to start using electric-powered vehicles. Officials at the Port of Los Angeles and South Coast Air Quality Management District received an invitation to encourage truck drivers to switch to electric vehicles after health researchers reported earlier this year that diesel and other air pollutants are causing thousands of premature deaths to workers and residents who live and work around the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach (see “New study points to cancer risk around Southland ports,” February 2008 Dispatcher, p. 7).

Dirty, dangerous air and the spiraling cost of fuel have moved the Port of Los Angeles to launch a demonstration project to test the world’s most powerful, short-range, heavy-duty electric truck. The experimental truck is expensive at more than $527,000, but the Port says the high initial cost must be compared with lower operating costs—about 20 cents per mile for the electric truck versus 80-90 cents for a comparable diesel. The electric truck is supposed to be able to carry a fully-loaded 40-foot container for 30 miles on a full charge with a maximum speed of 40 mph. The new truck is the first in a planned fleet of 20 electric yard hostlers and five electric drayage trucks that will be delivered over the next 12 months.

“Using this truck and the fleet of electric vehicles at the port should be an important step forward,” said Adrian Diaz, ILWU Marine Clerks Representative from Southern California.

The Dockers Section of the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) represents over 400,000 dockworkers in 190 unions from 100 countries. The group gathered in Stockholm, Sweden on June 16-19, 2008 to coordinate strategy and solidarity efforts, share information, and elect new leadership for the coming years.

ILWU International President Bob McEllrath was nominated to serve as 2nd Vice Chair of the ITF Dockers Section by President Richard Hughes of the International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA). More than 100 delegates voted unanimously to approve McEllrath who was unable to attend due to the Longshore Contract negotiations in San Francisco, but ILWU Secretary Treasurer Willie Adams was on hand to accept the nomination and thank delegates who also passed a resolution pledging their full support on hand to accept the nomination and thank delegates who also passed a resolution pledging their full support for the ILWU’s Longshore Contract negotiations. Also attending from the ILWU were Ray Familidze, International Relations Coordinator, and Mark Jurisic, member of Local 13.

“I’m pleased for the chance to represent dockers in this new position that will help us build solidarity and support workers around the world,” said McEllrath from San Francisco.

High heat is killing workers

Doroteo Jimenez carries a coffin representing his 17-year-old niece, Maria Isabel Vasquez Jimenez, who died in the fields of California’s Central Valley on May 16th from heat stress. Vasquez Jimenez was two months pregnant when she collapsed while working for Merced Farm Labor. By the time she was taken to the hospital, her core body temperature was 108.4°F. Her employer failed to comply with California’s new law that requires adequate shade and drinking water for outdoor workers.

The United Farm Workers organized a pilgrimage from Lodi to Sacramento to honor Vasquez Jimenez and press for better enforcement of the Cal/OSHA rules that are supposed to protect workers from excessive heat. Those rules didn’t take effect until 2005—and they only apply to outdoor work.

Workers at Rite Aid’s distribution center in Lancaster, CA, who recently voted to join ILWU warehouse Local 26, want to see those rules expanded to cover indoor work. Blistering heat is common inside Rite Aid’s high-desert warehouse during the summer because most work areas have no air conditioning. One man died at the end of his shift in 2006, and many co-workers believe that the high temperatures at work contributed to his death.

Former Rite Aid workers testified to the California legislature last year to support a bill requiring Cal/OSHA to set rules on indoor heat. The legislature passed the bill, but Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger vetoed it.

Helping kids in the community

Casey Breaker (right) joined more than 20 volunteers from Local 4 that helped 100 developmentally disabled kids and their families go fishing at the Columbia Springs Fish Hatchery. Local 4 members also contributed $1,000 to the project and received publicity on the event’s web site, a banner, and on T-shirts. “Every single participant thanked us for a great event,” said Cager Clabaugh, Local 4 President. “The real benefit was seeing those kids’ faces when they hooked a big fish. It was definitely the most rewarding thing I’ve ever done for Local 4, and something that made us even more proud to be longshoremen.”

Flying a new ILWU flag

Local 502 members in Canada have designed a flag that they’d like to make available to other locals. “We thought all ILWU locals needed a flag, so we designed this one to fly proudly at our local, display at rallies, and march with on picket lines,” said Tim Farrell, who led the rank-and-file flag effort with Troy Konkin.

Konkin whose inspiration powered the project. The new flag was raised alongside the Canadian Mapleleaf in a ceremony on July 5th. ILWU Canada President Tom Dufresne spoke about the history of Bloody Thursday and the Battle of Ballentine as the flags flew overhead, and everyone celebrated with a BBQ afterward. More details and ordering information are available from Tim Farrell at Local 502 at 604-580-8882. In back row, left to right: night B.A Marko Karpan, day B.A. Chris Verbeek, Secretary Treasurer Rob Ford, Executive Board member Tim Farrell, E.A.P. Councilor Darwin Gerdard, retiree Joe Brooks, and member Jim O’Donnell. In front are: President Chad O’Neil, Executive Board member Vern Whitley, member Chuck Zuggerman, and member Troy Konkin.
Spring Elections Set Stage for Fall Showdown

California’s June 3rd primary election marked an important step forward for the ILWU’s new effort to build political power and establish a “good jobs” agenda in the Central Valley town of Stockton. Month-long work by ILWU members resulted in a string of victories, thanks to volunteers and paid canvassers who knocked on thousands of doors, distributed piles of campaign literature, and hammered in hundreds of lawn signs.

ILWU-endorsed candidates in Stockton were victorious in three important contests for local office, including a first place finish for mayoral candidate Ann Johnston. The campaign effort in Stockton shows how local union volunteers can play a critical role in the ILWU’s long-term strategy of building power for working families and winning public support for more good-paying union jobs in California’s delta region.

The effort in Stockton began back in March when ILWU members from Locals 54 and 6 interviewed candidates running for local office.

“Our goal was to find candidates who were willing to stand up for good jobs in the community and a union voice in our workplaces,” explained Local 54 Secretary-Treasurer Gene Davenport.

More than a dozen candidates were interviewed that spring, each grilled by a friendly but determined group of members who asked each candidate where they stood on good jobs that mattered most to working families.

By the month of May, Local 54 and 6 members were pounding the pavement in neighborhoods, telling voters about the slate of candidates who promised to help create more good-paying jobs – especially at the Port of Stockton. In addition to volunteers from Locals 54 and 6, the effort benefited from the impressive showing of coast-to-coast solidarity.

Help for the Stockton campaign came from longshore, warehouse, and railroad locals across California, producing 13,000 slate cards that identified candidates endorsed by the union. Most were mailed to Local 13 members, but large numbers also went to members in Locals 63, 63-OCLU, 94, 26, and 49.

Local 63 made space available in their offices for volunteer phone bankers who contacted voters in the harbor area. Some of the volunteers were local high school students who wanted a way to get involved in their community and experience the excitement of joining a political campaign.

The results on election day were positive: most ILWU-endorsed candidates won their races in Stockton.

“We were thrilled with the results,” said Rich Dines who chairs the Southern California District Council. “We supported some younger candidates who tell short in the Torrance City Council race, but they were long shots who may run again in the future.”

Dines also cited the ILWU’s role in a controversial State Senate race in the 25th District that pitted longtime political maverick Matt Dinsmore, who ran with heavy labor endorsements—against the more moderate former Assembly Member Bob Wieckowski, who secured the ILWU endorsement and scored an upset despite being the underdog.

This fall, the District Council expects to be helping Congresswoman Nick Liebman who is running an uphill race down in San Diego’s 50th Congressional District that was once held by Randy “Duke” Cunningham — the disgraced Congressman who resigned before going to prison for taking bribes from defense contractors.

Dines is also interested in exploring work with the Northern California District Council to get a labor-friendly Congressmember elected in the 44th District along the Feather River, that was held for years by anti-union extremist John Doolittle who recently announced he would retire after the FBI raided his home in connection with crimes committed by convicted felon and former lobbyist Jack Abramoff. The November race will pit the labor-friendly retired Lt. Col. Charles Brown against the anti-union businessman Tracy McClintock who recently moved 300 miles to live in the district.

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Slate Mailers in the Southland

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Northern California Campaigns

The Northern California District Council reports that the June 3 elections were generally successful for labor in the Bay Area and beyond. Local 6 Secretary-Treasurer Fred Peckler said that several measures supported by locals and the District Council in San Francisco were passed by voters, including Proposition G, which will create more affordable housing in the Hunter’s Point/Bayview neighborhood.

Voters also approved more school bonds in San Francisco and several other areas that will increase teacher pay. Labor also won big in San Francisco by helping defeat Proposition 98 that would have abolished rent control in the city and statewide.

In a hotly-contested State Senate race, the District Council backed San Francisco Supervisor Tom Leno, who defeated incumbent Senator Carol Migden. The Council also endorsed San Francisco Supervisor Tom Ammiano, who ran unopposed for Levi’s vacant seat in the state Assembly. In the East Bay, Local 6 members and the ILWU backed State Assemblywoman Lori Hancock who won a tough race for the State Senate seat, vacated by term-limited Senator Pro-Tem Don Perata. Elsewhere in the East Bay, union members got behind the winning campaigns of labor activists Jim Prola on the San Leandro City Council and Rebecca Kaplan on the Oakland City Council. Both Councilmembers supported more than 300 ILWU Local 6 members who honored Teamster Picket Line last summer during the month-long Waste Management strike in the East Bay.

In Sacramento, Local 17 got involved in their city’s mayoral election. The Local is supporting challenger Kevin Johnson who’s running against incumbent Mayor Heather Fargo. Johnson came out ahead in the primary, but moves to a November 3rd runoff because neither candidate received the required majority on June 3rd.

Up north in Eureka, Local 14 President Damien Moeoney reports that the locals’ choice in the County Supervisor election, Roger Rodina, was tragically killed in a car accident on his way to a fundraiser. Politicians in Eureka are exploring the possibility of developing a container port. The container port idea gained credence after investment firm Goldman-Sachs expressed interest in a 50-year lease for the right to operate a privately-owned dock in the town that once exported massive quantities of lumber and wood products.

Washington State

Washington’s August primary was later than most states, but that didn’t stop thousands of ILWU members from participating in the primary, backing candidates who pledged to support working families.

Governor Chris Gregoire has been a staunch supporter of working families and a friend to the ILWU, but her race may be a nail-biter: she’s in a rematch against her 2004 opponent, anti-union Republican Dino Rossi, who was defeated by just 133 votes. The Governor received help last November when the ILWU co-sponsored a fundraiser attended by International President Bob McEllrath and Secretary-Treasurer Willie Adams, along with Local 23 President Conrad Spell, Local 19 President Herald Ugles, Local 23 member Scott Mason. Other ILWU members and locals have also supported the Governor at more recent fundraisers and events.

Local 4 President Cager Clabaugh promoted the Governor’s effort to bring renewable energy jobs to Washington at a news event held at the Port of Vancouver in April. Clabaugh told the Columbian newspaper that there...
This is a challenging moment for trade unionism, says MUA veteran, Col. Davies. "That's a tremendous challenge, but we're going to face it," he said. "Our job is to be strong in the face of this kind of psychic power, and then to use that power to reclaim our jobs against almost impossible odds."

The Your Rights at Work Campaign

Fred Krausett, MUA Veterans Association Secretary General, recognized the courage of the veterans in the multimillion dollar Your Rights at Work Campaign. The campaign included as many community organizations as it did labor and was an advance in the elections beginning in 2005, culminating with the defeat of the Howard government in 2007. Fred, who attended and spoke at the 2007 PCPA Convention in San Pedro, outlined the considerable time, money, and physical effort put forward by the veterans. He explained how veterans spent three years pasting out bumper stickers and collecting pennies to help pay for the workers' campaign. Pensioners distributed thousands of well-designed brochures throughout Australia, showing verifiable examples of workers being mistreated under the Howard government's draconian labor laws.

As the elections approached, political districts were divided among veteran groups who walked door-to-door, encouraging voters to participate. Veterans returned to those political districts on election eve to get out the vote. The veterans ranged from 60 to 90 years old, and they showed the steep hills they walked during the election. They were met at the door with the respect due their age, and that played a big role in the final vote.

It was often said that "Howard government did for the union what the union was not able to do for itself, that is to unite members in the struggle for human rights." These veterans worked to free themselves from a repressive regime with the zeal of those who have been to the brink of disaster but survived together through solidarity. Now they aren't likely to sit on their laurels. The victory was won but the campaign continues. The goal is not to be held by the newly elected Labor Party's feet to the fire and force them to make good on their election promises to help workers.

"Retired from the industry, not from the struggle"

We were well represented at the MUA Veterans Conference by PCPA President Rich Austin, who explained some of the labor and social issues we're facing in America. Austen talked about the importance of internationalism, saying corporations don't have borders and neither should we. "We've got more in common with a Mexican laborer than I do with a stockbroker in my own country," he said. "Workers all have the same problems. We want a decent job. We want to work and go home in the evening without being injured. We demand good pay, good pensions, good conditions, and peace in the world. These things can only be achieved by international trade unions.

After the conference, the MUA veterans sent us north to visit Newcastle - the world largest coal shipping port, where we met with wonderful salt-of-the-earth veteran sailors and dockers of the MUA that proudly told us about the part they played to bring down the Howard government.

It was a wonderful meeting, full of hearty handshakes, hugs, and real feelings of comradeship. At the end of our visit, we all sang "Solidarity Forever."

The Port of Brisbane

The MUA veteran Col. Davies took me on a tour of the Brisbane port where I saw workers doing back-breaking work. Three Transtainers at the Patrick Stevedore facility in the port of Brisbane are run simultaneously by one operator with a box of joysticks and a computer. The Transtainer operates electronic guides imbedded in the asphalt and a computer move it to the appropriate container pile. The operator stands on the ground, lowers the beam, picks up the container, and then the computer takes over. The operation is slower than human run Transtatmers, but computers don't flex their muscles.

The Port of Melbourne

MUA Deputy Secretary David Schleibs took me around the port of Melbourne to see places where the action happened during the Patrick's dispute in 1998. He shared many stories about the dispute. MUA veteran Percie White told me that members at the time felt a tremendous power about their futures, but had the steely resolve to see the dispute to its end, no matter what the outcome. David Schleibs explained the important role that community support played in their union victory. For example, he told of two older women, a mother and daughter, not related to the union in any way, who put their family's shares in front of the company gate and announced they were there for the duration and would not be moved until the union's victory was won.

Many different unions played important roles in the Patrick's dispute. The building trades shut down their construction sites and showed up strategically one early Friday morning just as the police were about to make their big move against the MUA picket lines. As the police massed to attack the MUA picket lines, they turned around to find hundreds of union construction workers behind them. Being surrounded, they were forced to negotiate with the unions in order to make a peaceful retreat. From then on, the police never attempted to remove the union lines. Instead, they participated in daily meetings with the union so everyone could stay informed. The police began their own negotiations with the government for a new contract, and they received support from Australia's Labor Federation that helped them win a good union contract for their members. As we say, "what goes around comes around."

During my visit, the ILWU was constantly singled out, as a pivotal force that affected the outcome of the Patrick dispute. The refusal by ILWU members to "load 'hat cargo" carried by the Columbus Canada in 1998 was a turning point when the MUA knew they would win the Patrick dispute. As David Schleibs put it, "That demonstration of international solidarity by the ILWU on behalf of the MUA may have been just a pebble in labor history, but it has sent ripples of working class power reverberating around the world. We can be sure that it's been noted in the board rooms of world capital, and all labor is better for it."

Conclusion

What did I learn from this very long, tiring, trip to Australia? First and foremost, I learned that we have friends - or as they would say - "companions" - who will truly stand by us. These friends believe they survived the greatest threat in the history of their union, and were saved, in part, by the willingness of ILWU members to stand by the MUA. Also, the veterans warned us to learn from their experience. We should not wait until a crisis is upon us, but develop the capacity now to mount a fight-back campaign. We should know that the next attack is coming, and to support our labor and community friends, we will certainly be in need of their support one day. Although pensioners like are retired from the industry, we will always be workers standing in the way of the private complete control of the waterfront.

Traveling around Australia and visiting with MUA members and veterans at the various branches has made me feel very hopeful about the future and proud of all of my fellow ILWU members and community activists. I'll never feel that we are too few or too powerless to leave a better world for our children to inherit.

If you're a pensioned ILWU member and want to be active, contact your local for information on your local pension group or contact Rich Austin President PCPA, e-mail, rich@unions-america.com.

— Lewis Wright
Southern California Pension Group
ILWU
Executive Board

What’s your local doing to help the community?

“Back in 1998, a group of volunteers from Local 13, led by Michael Ponce and Jerry Avila, began our ‘Feed the Community Day.’ Then we added a toy drive, which has turned into an annual holiday party that we host for needy families in our community. Each event takes a lot of work, but hundreds of volunteers help out and members now offer to give me donations, so I carry around a receipt book with me.”

Lisa Tonson, Local 13
San Pedro

“People sometimes say to me, ‘You guys are the ones who are always making donations.’ We hear that because we help a lot of families. We serve food at the soup kitchen, give gift cards to needy students, and much more. This year we’re volunteering at the Tall Ships Festival, and we also raised more than $8,600 for Multiple Sclerosis. Some of the funds that members donate during the Holiday Toy Drive go toward the YMCA women’s shelter. We ask the shelter what they need and then go shopping at a union grocery store.”

Holly Hulscher, Local 23
Tacoma, WA
Local 4 workers in Vancouver, Washington, will soon operate a second heavy-pick mobile harbor crane, thanks to a $5 million expenditure by the Port Commission. The crane is needed to replace a 32-year-old crane that is approaching the end of its wind energy turbines. "Wind energy has been a huge shot in the arm for Local 4," says President Cager Clabaugh. "We’ve negotiated, and if we didn’t, the company would have brought in foreign workers. We’ve been able to bring this technology to this country and bring it to this region." The deal has been held up because of contention on the site requirements for further cleanup, but it should be ready by March, 2009. Meanwhile the port will lease 107 acres from Alcoa to store wind energy pieces. The local held a retirees dinner on May 21 to “thank our retired brothers and sisters for their service and for bringing us with this wonderful legacy,” Clabaugh said. “We appreciate all they’ve done for us.”

Local 27 celebrated their fifteenth year in the ILDU on May 27. Secretary-Treasurer Jay Kalia said, “We were among the last ILA locals to join the ILWU.” Retiree and former Secretary-Treasurer Bob Caso said, “Joining up was the logical thing to do because there was no way we could get a pension with just a few ILA guys in a couple locals. Harry Bridges said the ILWU would negotiate pensions at the next contract, and that’s when people decided to vote to join.”

Local 4 is still negotiating with Smurfit-Stone Recycling in this summer, according to President Jeff Carter. Local 6 also represents Smurfit-Stone workers in the Bay Area. The company is apparently making money on their recycling operations, but demanding major concessions. “They want workers to pay 17 percent of their medical by the end of their contract, up from three percent now,” says Carter. “The pay offer is so low the workers lose about $300 a month under the company’s current package offer. Workers sort recycled cards, cardboard, and paper. The Port of Sacramento decided to have SSA-Crestern run their port, so 18 employees from local 17 will no longer be Port employees – but they’ll get a severance package of about $5,500 each. All will continue working for SSA.”

Local 13 has been pushing companies to improve air quality around the docks for several years, now the local is leading the way by using low-emission hybrid cars for business agents who respond to member concerns on the docks. Two new Ford Escape Hybrids have replaced a pair of gas-guzzlers. Another air quality advance at the harbor are the pneumatic on-deck rail expansion plans are now looking more successful. The goal is to reduce truck traffic that’s currently required to shuttle cargo nearly five miles from the docks to nearby rail yards. Running rail cars to the docks would save fuel and time. There’s also a possibility that electric-powered locomotives could operate on the port rails instead of dirty diesel engines. The expansion plan is on anvil Railroad Pacific would do double shifting of their intermodal freight facility to 1.5 million trips per year. Approval for the project’s environmental review process came on June 24th, but many steps remain before it becomes a reality. The LA City Council took a step toward cleaner air on June 17 when they approved the port’s “Clean Trucks Program.” The plan would pay truckers with low-emission trucks, operated by drivers who are employees instead of independent contractors that companies have exploited for decades. The local is believed the best in the west. Truckers with employee status would be eligible to join a union and could escape the cut-throat competition that’s driven some into bankruptcy. Meanwhile, next to Long Beach, locals at the Port and City Council refused to approved a Clean Trucks plan like L6 that gave truckers the right to join a union. Instead, Long Beach officials backed an employer-friendly plan that allows companies to continue hiring independent contractors so wages will remain low and workers unorganized. Local 13 hosted so many sporting events during the months of June that it was a little like the Olympics with tournaments for men’s and women’s softball, golf, basketball, horseshoes, and motocross for MX dirt bikes.

Local 17’s negotiations with Smurfit-Stone Recycling continue this summer, according to President Jeff Carter. Local 6 also represents Smurfit-Stone workers in the Bay Area. The company is apparently making money on their recycling operations, but demanding major concessions. “They want workers to pay 17 percent of their medical by the end of their contract, up from three percent now,” says Carter. “The pay offer is so low the workers lose about $300 a month under the company’s current package offer. Workers sort recycled cards, cardboard, and paper. The Port of Sacramento decided to have SSA-Crestern run their port, so 18 employees from local 17 will no longer be Port employees – but they’ll get a severance package of about $5,500 each. All will continue working for SSA.”

Local 19 members should see more work now that the Port of Seattle has ok’d the expansion of Terminal 23 by 16 acres. The new land will be used for container space, increasing capacity for Terminals 25 and 30. The port announced April 21 that it had signed a new agreement with SSA, will occupy Terminal 30 next year. The cruise terminal now at Terminals 25 and 30 will move to Terminal 91. This is a step toward the port’s vision of reclaiming Terminal 91 since the ship leaves ports last year,” President Herald Ugles said. The port will invest $120 million to create a state-of-the-art container terminal that includes   30,000 TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units). China Shipping began calling at the port in 2006. They are expected to move more than 97,000 TEUs each year. The port will acquire right of way for 42 miles of railway in a $107 million deal signed in May – and celebrated in early July – between the Port, King County and BNSF Railways. The agreement will also provide a hiking trail along 32 miles of the right of way. Local 23 members and retirees are five miles to raise funds for multiple sclerosis, or MS – a disease that destroys nerve cells. The union also hosted a fund-raiser breakfast for two of the blackjack players in the casino. This year’s retirees will be working there. Gratz filed an unfair labor practice charge with the National Labor Relations Board, which responded on June 6 by declaring their intent to issue a complaint against United Parafiyde if the company didn’t honor the original contract. The company decided to sign the original agreement on June 13th.

Local 26 spent a year negotiating a successor contract for two dozen workers at the Port of Seattle, and in that operation they’ve opened a jet fuel tank farm, bunks Navy ships, loads fuel trucks, and manages fuel pipeline and products flow. After workers agreed to a revised contract on May 14, President Luisa Gratz went to get the signatures from company officials – and that’s when the trouble started. “I glanced at the contract they gave me and saw they’d changed the language that workers agreed to on retirement and other issues,” she said. “I told them it wasn’t the same document that members had ratified, so I wasn’t signing it.” Company officials told Gratz that Local 26 didn’t like it, the union could either strike or get locked-out and be replaced with Paradyne’s friends in the Army, Navy and Matson who love to be working there. Gratz filed an unfair labor practice charge with the National Labor Relations Board, which responded on June 6 by declaring their intent to issue a complaint against United Parafiyde if the company didn’t honor the original contract. The company decided to sign the original agreement on June 13th.

Local 30 President Dave Liebengood thanks Local 30 Bundl Steward Bruce Wade (L).
California team’s first practice was July 17 at the Bloody Thursday Picnic. Locals 13, 63, and 94 each now have a Southern California Drill Team organized.

Roger Holt was a member of Local 51. He died doing what he loved on his farm, and he died doing what he loved.
Longshoreman Ted ‘Whitey’ Kelm passes

In 1979, Kelm (left) played factory boss J.J. Davis in the film “Norma Rae.”

Preliminary contract agreement continued from page 1

I’ve experienced here is phenomenal. Everybody has the same common goal. This kind of connection is something I’ve been looking for all my life, and now my life is complete.” Local 24 Drill Team member Paul “from da hali” Williams, and the presentation of a special plaque to member Norman McLeod for his years of service to the union, families enjoyed a buffet lunch, dancing, magic show, and face painting for the kids.

Thousands attended the big Bloody Thursday Picnic at Oaks Park brought together Locals 8, 28, 40 and 92, plus pensioners and the Auxiliary members. A solemn ceremony honored fallen workers and family members from Locals 9, 19, 52 and 98 packed into Vasa Park around Lake Samisham in Issaquah, Washington for their Bloody Thursday Picnic. There was live music, a full picnic spread with barbeque, plus amusement rides for the kids. Business Agent Frances Herrera helped organize the event. Russ Young from Local 98 was chief BBQ chef.

More than 1,000 Seattle-area workers and family members from Locals 9, 19, 52 and 98 packed into Vasa Park around Lake Samisham in Issaquah, Washington for their Bloody Thursday Picnic. There was live music, a full picnic spread with barbeque, plus amusement rides for the kids. Business Agent Frances Herrera helped organize the event. Russ Young from Local 98 was chief BBQ chef.

Tom Price
SUMMER READING LIST


continued on page 12
continues from page 11


An articulate insider's view of the ILWU and the labor movement by the late labor commentator and former editor of The Dispatcher.

Schmidt, Henry. Secondary Leadership in the ILWU 1933-1966. Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1983. The oral history and anecdotal account of Schmidt's San Francisco career as a member and officer of the ILWU.

University libraries.

Schneider, Betty, and Abraham Siegel. Industrial Relations in the Pacific Coast Longshore Industry. Institute of Industrial Relations, University of Southern California, 1956. A traditional but insightful look at the role of the ILWU in transforming longshore labor relations, focusing on pivotal bargaining in 1948. Univer-

sity libraries.

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

- A Spark Is Struck: Jack Hall & the ILWU in Hawaii. By Sanford Zalburg. A high quality reissue 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 DJ 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 DJ 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.

- The ILWU Story: A Spark Is Struck. 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.

- The Big Strike. By Mike Quinn. The classic partisan account of the 1934 strike.

- The March inland $19.00

- 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. Reissue of the only comprehensive account of the union's organizing campaign in the northern California waterfront and distribution industry. 

- Videos

Eye of the Storm: Our fight for Justice and a Better Contract. A 58-minute DVD of the original video production by California Working Group, Inc., memorializes Harry Bridges through still pictures, voice recordings, interviews, and reminiscences. Originally produced for the 1990 memorial service in San Francisco. DVD $5.00

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continued from page 9

flowers, a donation be made his name to the B.C. Children’s Hospital, 4480 Oak St., Vancouver BC V6H 3W4.

Local 314 foremen are still negoti-
ating for their contract, which was bargained separately from the ILWU Canada long- 
shore agreement. The local will hold their gill tournament on August 14. For more information, call (604) 298-9689.

Local 523 in Prince Rupert has been bar-

gaining with Ridley Terminals since June 2007. Local President Ron Coolin says he’s getting help from ILWU Canada Presi-

dent Don Denteneer with negotiations.

The union’s members load coal into mass-

ive ships for export. “It takes 22 coal

trains a mile long to fill up a 200,000 ton

ship,” explained Coolin. Coal shipments have increased dramati-

cally over the past year, helping the local to grow from 25 members to 68 in the last 18 months. Ridley Island will be the site of a major potash fertilizer export terminal.

Canpotex, an exporter for three Saskatche-

wan potash companies, will spend between $300 and $500 million on the facility at Ridley Island, a port-owned 1,000 acre plot with deep-sea access. The Canadian National Railway (CNR) serves the island. Besides moving potash, and coal, the CNR also brings grain to the port from Canada’s massive inland wheatfield/hayfield fields. COSCO Container Lines announced June 18 it is interested in calling Prince Ru-

pert and phase in 7,500-TEU vessels, compared with 5,400-TEUs at present.

— reported by Tom Price

12

DISPATCHER • June 2008