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Solving the port congestion crisis

By James Spinosa
ILWU International President

Every goons at the thought of Christmas shopping in midsummer, but retailers are already stocking up for the winter shopping frenzy, lacking off the peak shipping season. Record volumes of imports feeding into an ill-prepared transportation system threaten to create an unprecedented level of port congestion. This congestion in turn endangers the country’s economic health and national security as well as the safety everyone who lives and works on or near the docks.

The employers are trying to blame the backup on the union. In fact, this crisis has been brewing for a long time and has many linked causes. ILWU has proposed solutions over and over, but we can address only part of the problem and we can’t do it alone. Our members need to see through all the rhetorical smoke and understand that the union wants to talk about solutions. Since we approved our current contract with the Pacific Maritime Assn. (PMA) in early 2003, total container volume of imports has increased by 10 percent. This is not unexpected. For the last several years, the employers have been seeing projections that new containers coming in to the West Coast would double and triple by 2020. Now the new generation of super-sized container ships is coming on line, ships that bring in nearly 40 percent more cargo than the older models.

The employers have ignored the warnings, moving slowly to accommodate this growth with infrastructure improvements, appointment systems, or increased ILWU participation.

The union warned of labor shortages many times during the past 10 years. We recently gave the PMA a proposal to substantially increase the workforce at the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, the largest and most congested under ILWU jurisdiction. The union proposed registering 2,000 more “B” members in longshore Local 13 and adding 8,000-11,000 casuals. Ideally the employers have agreed to have smaller increases in staffing.

This is a step in the right direction. Having more ILWU members available for work can speed loading and unloading of cargo and allow for expanded hours of operations and better security, but it will not address the problems plaguing the truck and rail systems.

On the railroad side, the employers need to address the labor and equipment shortages resulting from their own poor planning. For too long, they have not invested enough in new locomotives and cars. That is a good sign. We need to do more to get the containers to the rail yards in a way that the trains can be made up efficiently.

If the terminals, steamship lines and railroad yards coordinated their needs better, they could flow from the dock to rail yard on a priority basis. This would speed the trains and more efficiently use the rest of the transport system. They also need to keep their warehouse open for evening and night shifts so a 24-hour gate operation can provide the maximum relief possible.

Congestion also adds to the challenge of providing port security. More people will be needed to do adequate inspection on container openings, seals and documentation. The union has advocated strongly in Washington D.C. for these measures. Many employers have skimped on security to keep costs down.

These solutions will require price increases and a vision that places the country’s security and economic well-being ahead of profit.
Ruben Lopez ready to harness his 360 horses.

A day in the life of a port trucker

by Tom Price

Port trucker Ruben Lopez begins his struggle for survival before dawn as the seagulls wake up in the morning. By 7:30 on July 12 he had left the Port of Oakland, carrying an empty container on his truck and bound for Napa to pick up a load of wine.

He took nine gear shifts to get onto the I-80 freeway entrance. Ruben, as he is known on the docks, shifts smoothly and sees everything. His 360 diesel horses strained to haul the truck, the trailer, and seemed to pause at its summit to allow its stomachs to catch up. Ruben looked down over the eastern I-80. Traffic was miraculously light.

“This looks good,” he said about the traffic. “And up from here in the truck you can see everything, including all the crazy stuff the cars do.”

His white Freightliner clanged slightly as Ruben downshifted to ease its descent. He could drive for miles without touching the brakes, keeping a constant strain on his engine that provided its best gas mileage. He needed only five gallons of diesel to go 100 miles, because with the cutthroat competition in the trucking industry since deregulation, wait time is the only increase or delay that could mean he works for free. He’s paid by the load, not the hour.

Like most other port truckers around the country, Ruben is a contract driver who hires his own truck to the company that dispatches him to the docks. In late April he joined thousands of West Coast drivers in a strike against low pay that shut the ports of Oakland and Los Angeles, but Ruben wasn’t able to see much of it. Thousands more struck late last month on the East Coast, but the federal courts have ruled the drivers are owners, not employees, and it is illegal under antitrust law for them to bargain collectively. Independent truckers are a small cog in scheme of global transport, an industry dominated by huge steamship lines that control terminals, imitating Chinese industries, and huge retailers like Walmart that are powerful enough to set their own rates.

“Looking out the front window,” he said. “This looks good,” he said about the traffic. “And from up here in the truck you can see everything, includ-

ing all the crazy stuff the cars do.”

He drove north, discussing the high fuel costs, insurance rates, maintenance rates, and low pay. Ruben Lopez ready to harness his 360 horses.

by Tom Price

Port truckers on the East and Gulf Coasts parked their rigs between June 28 and July 13 in protest of the low pay and high cost of delivering cargo to and from the ports. They nearly shut down the ports of Boston, Savannah, Charleston and Miami. Job actions also disrupted the ports of New York, Newark, Baltimore, New Orleans, Los Angeles and Long Beach.

The strike came to a rolling stop in Miami on July 5 when U.S. District Court Judge Patricia Seitz ordered Miami drivers to cease “engaging in any conspiracy combination, or boycott in violation of any provision of the Sherman or Clayton [antitrust] Acts.” She extended the injunction to Sept. 3, when she will consider other filings. Miami drivers had picketed under a protest permit that expired July 9.

Seitz based her ruling on the status of drivers as “owner-operators” who are “unseen by and not seen from bargain rates. Meeting together to discuss rates could be a “conspiracy.” Forming a union to collectively bargain would also be a “price-fixing conspiracy,” so drivers have no right to form a union. Even though they might work 14 hours a day, they are not considered employees.

The strike issues were the same as in the West Coast protest from April 30 to May 6—high fuel costs, insurance rates, maintenance rates, and low pay. Truckers want some kind of collective bargaining power so they don’t have to go up against the huge multinational corporations that rule the shipping and retailing industry. Many truckers are also demanding the right to join a union.

The drivers get a set fee from a trucking broker whose rates are set by terminal operators or steamship lines. In many cases, the rates haven’t changed in 10 to 20 years. Out of that truckers pay all the expenses of running a truck. Anything left over is their wages. When their turnaround time takes more than a couple hours, they work for less than minimum wage.

The notion of re-regulation has floated around the docks for some time. In 1948 Congress passed the Reed-Bulkwinke Act that allowed trucking companies to agree amongst themselves on rates, a practice that the courts ruled “anti-competitive.” Some economists said the regulation was too tight, that it stifled competition too much and led to high rates. Reed-Bulkwinke was largely repealed in 1980. Since then, trucking rates have fallen 28 percent. Between 1983 and 1990, only 28 percent of truckers were organized, down from 60 percent in the 1970s, according to Thomas Gale Moore of the Hoover Institution. And since 1985 the competitive squeeze has lowered rates and wages on the least powerful competitors, the port truckers.

Truckers want increased container rates, pay for excessive wait times, fuel surcharge increases, posted rates, safer chassis and a federal investigation of insurance rate hikes.

The Teamsters, the ILWU and the American Trucking Assn. support a plan to drive to truck chassis owners responsible for maintaining their rigs. The West Coast strike got some relief on these issues. Some terminal operators agreed to increase rates to the trucking brokers, but it was spotty, according to Oakland trucker Ruben Lopez.

“No papers were signed,” he said. “Once the press left, a lot of them backed out.”

Row escape. Trucks are supposed to hold to the shoulder lanes, leading to constant lane changes as less skilled drivers try to merge. More wasted fuel.

By 8:35 Ruben reached the wine warehouse in Napa. He backed to the loading dock with skill approaching Darwinian, carefully rolling the rubber pads as lightly as a bee on a flower.

"Made really good time getting here today," Ruben said. " Went to Turlock last week. Left at 9 a.m. didn’t get back till midnight."

Sometimes clerks at the port can waste truckers’ time. “They might say they’ll be ready in 15 minutes or more,” he said, with a smile, stretch-

ing an imaginary rubber band with his hands.

“Since our strike last month, there’s been an improvement on the docks,” he said. "When you can’t find a box they used to look at you like you were stupid. Lately, the clerks have been more helpful. Sometimes people don’t realize we wait on our own time.”

He’s friendly with the people working at the warehouses, and they try to make it easy for him. Ruben was left to make his load in 20 minutes, which he knows he’s on his own time. Ruben hauled away from the loading dock and headed up a gently rolling hill covered with grape vines. The timetaller couldn’t be better, he said. That being he had enough to make some money on this trip. But costs were never far from his mind as he explained the costs of fueling his rig.

“Diesel is around $2.15 a gallon now,” he said. “I filled up on Friday, $260 worth. That’s a whole load of gas. We’ve had to have another $150 worth to finish the week.”

Ruben waits three hours just to get a trailer, explained the costs of fueling his rig. Out of that the driver pays all costs of his rig: fuel, insurance, installment payments, repair; leaving only a few dollars left over for the driver.

Anything more than a three-hour turnaround and drivers make less than the minimum wage. Sometimes Ruben waits three hours just to get into the terminal.

“I have no trouble with my employees joining a union tomorrow,” Aboudi said. “I’d be with them every step of the way. We’re in this together. We have the same interest. They measure time with a rubber pad as lightly as a bee on a flower. “No papers were signed,” he said. “Once the press left, a lot of them backed out.”

“Sometimes they see you as just a truck, not a person,” he said. “You have to do more than just drive a truck. It’s like human beings.”

He drove north, discussing the quality of truck chassis at various terminals. One of the shipping lines had chassis that “looked like they belong in a barnyard.” If the Highway Patrol pulls you over for a bad chassis, he said, the ticket is yours.

But Ruben is a perfectionist. He suddenly slowed down, shifting the truck to allow a less thoughtful driver to pass, then made the exit. Two toots of a diesel horn reminded the driver of his nar-

ners and loan scandal, and hungry port truckers, he said. “Some of these are forbidden by law from bargaining over shipping rates. Meeting together to discuss rates could be a “conspiracy.” Forming a union to collectively bargain would also be a “price-fixing conspiracy,” so drivers have no right to form a union. Even though they might work 14 hours a day, they are not considered employees.

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When the going gets tough, the tough get growing

by Marcy Rein

HONOLULU—Before Hawaii Local 142 did its training, Alex Torres thought organizing was for professionals. “I always figured it was the full-time, professional organizer department that does organizing,” said Torres, who works at the Dole Plantation Store on Oahu and helped bring it into Local 142. “Here I learned that it’s about everyone getting involved,” he said.

The June 4-7 workshop brought 53 rank-and-file activists together with 20 of the local’s full-time professional organizers and the ILWU International organizing staff. The Hawaii participants were a full diversity of Local 142, with people from Oahu, the Big Island (Hawaii), Maui, Kauai and Hawaii Island, working in agriculture, tourism, general trades, the longshore division and the Inlandboatmen’s Union.

“We wanted to put together a training with the national AFL-CIO’s top trainers to show us what we can do to move forward not only in Hawaii but on the mainland too,” said ILWU International Vice President Wesley Furtado. National AFL-CIO Organizing Director Stewart Acuff, Organizing Institute Director Sam Luebke and Director of Strategic Research Ken Zinn led the Thursday and Friday sessions, with Alison Reardon presenting on the Employee Free Choice Act Saturday morning. Over the two and a half days participants absorbed a brain-splitting amount of information and practiced the fundamentals of targeting and outreach.

Workers’ declining power in politics and on the job makes it clear for the first time, said Jonathon “Lono” Kane, IUB Regional Director for Hawaii. “We’re in the fight of our lives. If we don’t get together, those guys—the employers and their politicians—are going to have our lunch,” he said.

Union density, the percentage of unionized workers, has fallen sharply over the last 50 years. Now only one in three U.S. workers in eight belongs to a union, compared to more than one in three in 1955. When you take public workers out of the picture, it gets even grimmer. Fewer than one in ten private-sector workers have union representation.

The situation in Hawaii does better, with nearly one in four workers belonging to unions, it has lost density over the last 20 years. Shrinking numbers equal shrinking power, said Local 142 President Fred Gandolfo.

“People listen to numbers,” Gandolfo said. “Employers have fear of us and they’re afraid of labor and environmental regulation if they lose a union, and to recognize the UAW if a union can appeal to users of its services, expose its failure to comply with labor and environmental regulation or intervene when it needs government permits—all these abuses. To better the odds of winning a union, the AFL-CIO advocates a change in the law as well as a change of strategy. The Employee Free Choice Act would make card checks the standard way of getting union representation. [See box, page 5] But unions have already scored major wins with strategic organizing, using the leverage they have in bargaining to persuade employers to agree to card-check at non-union plants.

For example, UAW members bargaining with Daimler-Chrysler got a card-check neutrality agreement at two unorganized Freightliner plants in rural North Carolina. The employer agreed not to campaign against the union and to recognize the UAW if a majority of the workers signed cards. In one week in February 2003, the union signed more than half the 3,100 Freightliner workers.

Bringing on Freightliner made sense to the UAW because it helped boost the union density in their industry, and that helped build power. “You don’t build power one workplace at a time,” Ken Zinn said. “Where and who you organize matters.” With Peter Olney of the University of California’s Institute for Labor and Employment, Zinn talked participants through the fundamentals of strategic targeting.

Strategic targets may be non-union competitors of unionized companies, or related businesses, like the golf courses belonging to a union hotel, or new types of companies, like the wireless subsidiaries of traditional phone companies. A good target also has pressure points. Perhaps the union can appeal to users of its services, expose its failure to comply with labor and environmental regulation or intervene when it needs government permits—while workers put the heat on from the inside.

“This is basic, fundamental ILWU stuff,” said Local 142 Secretary-Treasurer Guy Fujimura. The union targeted hotels as an emerging industry on Maui in the 1960s and again in the late ’70s and early ’80s during the hotel boom fueled by Japanese capital. It used political power and community support to get neutrality agreements and then win elections.

Given the rapid changes in the cargo-moving industry, longshore needs to be concerned with organizing as well, said Local 142 Longshoreport Division BA Tyrene Tahara.

“We should have a bunch of longshoremen listening to this,” he said. “We’ll have a chance to help the guys on our flanks.” West Coast longshoremen had that same insight in the late 1930s when they defeated the “March Inland.” They organized the warehouse workers who handled the whole West Coast and made big potential seas into powerful allies.

All the participants at the training got a chance to formulate strategic targets, working in small groups then sharing the results with everyone. The Swanee Wailea Beach on Maui kicked off the presentation for the first group. “Forgive me, I’m shy, but I think we’re all in the same boat here,” he said. “A-men!” someone responded from the crowd, to general laughter.

That shyness got sorely tested when participants practiced house-calling. Many organizing drives are built on house calls, where the organizers or organizing committee members drop by workers’ homes unannounced to “talk union.”

“Organizing is a chance to learn to talk to one person,” Luebke said. “But these are deeper and more serious conversations than a fun outing riding. You’re dealing with deep fears and hopes, hopes for your future and your family.”

To make house calls work, you have to listen, listen and listen more. Laura Kupchick, who re-played the targeted workers, and some of them played hard. Even more experienced participants learned that the clutch of nerves while opening the conversation was as real as the thing they were trying to start.

But in the training, and real life, people realized they could do things they never thought possible.

“It’s brought me out of my shell,” said Leina Badiyo, who works at Hawaii Job Corps. “I know now I can talk to people.”

Carol Reyno, a soft-spoken former school teacher, never thought she could organize, even though she’s been unit secretary-treasurer at Youngs Royal Oahu for 18 years. “I always thought I couldn’t be an organizer because I wasn’t aggressive,” she said. “But in the training, and real life, people realized they could do things they never thought possible.

“Taki” Takano; Tessie Shinozawa from New Otani Kaimana Beach Hotel, Oahu; Simplecia Timosan from King Kamehameha Kona Beach Hotel and Gary Sugur an from ML Macadamia Orchards, Hawaii island.

Above, Merita Cress from Hawaiian Commercial and Sugar Co., Maui. Left, Ted Osorio, Oahu; Oahu (L) and Local 142 organizer Bill Udani.
Q: Could you give a capsule description of strategic organizing?

SA: The law no longer protects American workers when they try to form unions. Strategic organizing is a way to develop enough leverage with the employers to convince them they should agree to a more free and fair process, and to agree to arbitrate any law exceptions. It generally involves card-check—workers simply signing a card or a petition saying they want to sign a union—and some degree of employer neutrality in lieu of a government guarantee of the right to bargain. This is the foundation on which the organizing is leverage. You can develop it from any number of places. That’s the foundation. From there, workers have unions have leverage in our society and economy: in bargaining and in politics.

Q: How are workers central to strategic organizing?

SA: When you’re bargaining to organize, clear cases of workers who are already organized are central to bargaining for organizing rights for unorganized workers. You have to convince the company or within a sister company that the organized workers’ company has a lot of influence or power. Strategic organizing doesn’t work if workers aren’t part of it. You cannot develop enough leverage to force a company to grant union recognition without the workers being in motion.

Workers have to be more visible and active than ever in a (National Labor Relations Board) Board election process. Workers have to be the public face of the campaign, they have to be the face of the employer, they have to be in motion, moving issues and raising grassroots. They have to be organized into a leadership committee or group that once the employer agrees to a card-check they can get their co-workers to sign a card or petition.

SL: Workers are at the center of the activity but we’re not asking them to jump through any hoops set up by the government. What we’re asking them to do in this type of organizing is just start acting like a union inside the workplace. You can have campaigners who are workers who communicate up to the boss, start organizing for better wages and hours and working conditions.

Q: Workers have the same level of vulnerability when they stand up, whether they go for an NLRB election or not. How do you address that, especially now, when times are so tough?

SL: This is the same dilemma workers have faced going back to the 1930’s. The cost of doing business and power and workers have a decision to make: Either live with what the boss is putting on your plate or take a risk to make it better. Workers make the decision, we don’t. They decide whether to organize.

But American workers absolutely have their backs to the wall. Just in the last few years things have gotten worse for our non-union brothers and sisters. Look at the numbers of hours American workers put in, the stress of not having a nationalized health care program. Every single campaign revolves around that issue.

I can’t think of anything more stressful that not being able to take your kids to the doctor when they get sick, and there are millions of people making the decision whether they’re going to pay rent or take their kids to the hospital or make the decision to go to work with no food on the table. They’re deciding between making rent or getting into a public assistance program. That’s the decision they make. Every single campaign is going to revolve around that issue.

Q: What does this perspective say about unions’ relationships with other community organizations?

SA: At the foundation of our thinking about organizing is the Voice/Work distinction we’ve been talking about. The key in strategic organizing is having a group of agricultural workers keep from being evicted from their housing. The union I worked for, ACTWU, built the first low-income housing for workers in Manhattan. Unions are the vehicles through which working people get broader power in society.

SL: People either perceive their union as an institution or a move- ment. Things will work well with the ILWU because people see us as a liv- ing, breathing, purposeful organiza- tion. You do this by being engaged in social movements. It’s always in self- interest, sometimes direct and sometimes broader. Good union members get that every person brought in makes the circle stronger.

Trade unionists want to help other workers so that’s what they do. And they do that if they understand that their union is about a social movement, not just about getting a cleaner water fountain. Look at the article in Local 142’s newspaper about the union helping a group of unorganized workers keep from being evicted from their housing. The union I worked for, ACTWU, built the first low-income housing for workers in Manhattan. Unions are the vehicles through which working people get broader power in society.

SL: Strategic organizing doesn’t work without the right to organize. The key in strategic organizing is working on statewide health care reform with a coalition of other groups. When I was with the Atlanta Labor Council, we intentionally engaged in broader issues that really had nothing to do with union mem- bers. For instance, we had a big fight over the cost of prescription drugs at the county charity hospital, which had everything to do with poor people and homeless people. The responsibil- ity to engage in broader issues of jus- tice is both a moral responsibility and a tactical, strategic responsibility. The law is already challenged to meet that responsibility.

Q: You said the Employee Free Choice Act means this November’s election could be about much more than a change in the country’s top leadership. Can you explain?

SA: The law is an end run out of poverty for working people in the history of the human race is collective action, specifically unionization. Restoring the freedom and the right to form unions will allow millions of people to live a better life. It will keep people from something like 25 to 30 percent of American kids live in poverty. The key in strategic organizing is that standard of living, the nutrition of the food they eat, the condition of the environment they find themselves in. The quickest way is to give their parents the right to form a union on the job. That’s why the Employee Free Choice Act, the potential for its passage and the the future of its passage, makes this election about something that’s more funda- mental than most of the issues the candidates are talking about. It’s talking about billions of American workers forming unions to help change the balance of power, both economic and social—but we’ve got a lot of addressing of the balance of power to do. It will only begin that process.

Q&A WITH TOP AFL-CIO ORGANIZERS

How can we win back our right to organize?

During the Local 142 organizing training, national AFL-CIO Organizing Director Stewart Acuff and Organizing Initiatives (OI) Director Sam Luebke took time out to talk in more depth on some of the issues raised in the workshops.

Both men have long histories as union organizers. Acuff started out as a community organizer for ACORN and Citizen Action. He then worked for SEIU, organizing home care workers in Texas and building the state workers’ union in Georgia. Before coming to the AFL-CIO, he served as national director of the Atlanta Labor Council for nine years. Luebke spent 12 years with garment workers’ unions, starting with the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU) and ending up as its assistant organizing director. Three years ago he became director of the GI, the AFL- CIO’s organizer recruitment and training program.

Marcy Rein of the ILWU Labor Relations Organizing Dept. did the interview.

Eadie Omonaka

Stewart Acuff (with microphone) addresses the Local 142 organizing training while Ken Zinn (partly hidden) and Sam Luebke look on.

Employee Free Choice Act aims to change the rules

Current labor law does little to protect workers who try to organize and less to punish employers who break the rules. The Employee Free Choice Act (H.R. 3619 and S. 2292) would change that. It would:

• Make card-check recognition, rather than NLRB-supervised elections, the primary means of winning union recognition. “Card check” agreements bring in the union if a majority of workers in a shop sign a card requesting recognition. They allow card check but don’t require it. Most employers opt for the more drawn-out election procedure, which gives them time to campaign against the union.

• 5

• Set up arbitration and mediation requirements for first contracts. Now employers can stall first contracts for years. Under the Act, either side can call in a federal mediator if they still can’t come to an agreement within 90 days. If they don’t get a deal after working with the mediator for 30 days, they will have to go to binding arbitration. The contract that comes out of arbitration will last for at least two years.

• Require the NLRB to seek court injunctions against employers who break the law. If law-breaking will have a major impact on an organizing drive; require employers to pay triple the back pay due when they’re found guilty of illegally firing work- ers during a drive; and allow the Board to fine employers up to $250,000 per violation committed to thwart organizing.
Six bills for good jobs and health care

The California Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, is working hard to pass legislation that would:

- Raise the minimum wage
- Stop offshoring
- Raise the minimum wage
- Make Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs) disclose kickbacks
- Guarantee that work done under state service contracts

The bills are:
- AB-522: Would boost the state minimum wage from $6.75 per hour to $7.75 per hour over two years. The majority of minimum-wage workers are adults supporting families. With one wage-earner making $6.75 per hour at a full-time job, a family of three would still fall below the federal poverty line.
- AB-2031: Would require California employers to report to the state Employment Development Dept. the number of jobs they have in California, in the U.S. and overseas.
- SB-888: Would require all work affecting " homeland security " to be done in the U.S. This would ensure that ILWU members inspect containers moving in and out of the ports of honest employers, said State Senate President Pro Tem John Burton. "Tom and Art [CalPfd President Tom Rankin and Secretary-Treasurer Art Pulaski] saw the big picture. We get as much as we could in negotiations, but we were bluffing, all the way." After the plenary, conference participants broke into workshops to get the gritty details on the Federation-backed bills this session. (See box.) Of particular interest to the ILWU is SB-888, authored by Doria Gran (D-Dorothy Ana), which would ensure that ILWU workers inspect containers moving in and out of California ports.

California labor takes on the governor

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- SB-888: Would require all work affecting "homeland security" to be done in the U.S. This would ensure that ILWU members inspect containers moving in and out of the ports of honest employers, said State Senate President Pro Tem John Burton. "Tom and Art [CalPfd President Tom Rankin and Secretary-Treasurer Art Pulaski] saw the big picture. We get as much as we could in negotiations, but we were bluffing, all the way." After the plenary, conference participants broke into workshops to get the gritty details on the Federation-backed bills this session. (See box.) Of particular interest to the ILWU is SB-888, authored by Doria Gran (D-Dorothy Ana), which would ensure that ILWU workers inspect containers moving in and out of California ports.

State Assembly member Paul Koretz (with bullhorn) rallied the troops on the "Walk of Shame" that kicked off the campaign to save SB-2. The walk called to attention employers who are cutting health insurance, including the California Restaurant Assn., pictured here. To save health insurance, vote "Yes on 72." This November.

VOTE YES ON 72! The California Chamber of Commerce, Restaurant Association and Retailer’s Association raised around $3 million to put an initiative challenging SB-2 on the November ballot—so the CalPfd kicked off the campaign to save SB-2 with a “Walk of Shame,” visiting their offices and those of SBC, which was hardballing on health care in negotiations with its 100,000 members. About 300 people yelled and sweated their way around downtown Sacramento on the noon-time march. SB-2 will appear on the November ballot as Proposition 72. Supporters are organizing as “Yes on 72,” urging voters to uphold the bill passed by the legislature. For more information see www.SaveOurHealthCare.org.

The Tuesday walk gave activists a chance to meet with legislators, some of whom had worked with legislators that gave careful listeners some clues to the power-plays, billmakers and calculations that move issues at the Capitol. Schwarzenegger has reassured the rank and file, many said, with his fondness for going directly to the voters and facility at cutting special deals, playing divide-and-conquer.

"The governor is working his program to outmaneuver anyone who doesn’t share his view," said Assembly member Mark Ridley-Thomas (D-Los Angeles). "He also is expert at breaking off Democrats, as he did with workers’ comp and is doing on the budget. In all candor, we recognize the need to put a way to tag him yet, but we will." "He’s good at using television to put things over and going around the legislature, which isn’t perfect but has a process for studying legislation," NCDC’s Don Watson said.

This pattern challenges the Democrats to hold their members accountable, said State Sen. Richard Alarcon (D-Sun Valley). "Even some Democrats are hard to convince on issues fundamental to the Democratic Party.”

"We need to make sure each legislator’s office on Tuesday, the county labor councils hurried down in Sacramento to see their local legislators continued on page 7
**CAFTA stumbles in Congress**

by Tom Price

The Bush administration seems to have regained its political ground on its third-gear international agenda.

As the administration begins to roll out its new trade negotiations with Central America, the U.S. Congress is beginning to grapple with legislation that could weaken the administration’s hand. The legislation is coming from both sides of the political aisle, and it could be a major setback for the Bush administration’s efforts to push through its trade agenda.

CAFTA, or the Central American Free Trade Agreement, was signed by the Bush administration in 2005, and it is set to take effect in January 2006. The agreement would eliminate tariffs on goods traded between the United States and the five Central American countries that have signed on to the agreement.

However, there are concerns that the agreement could have negative implications for the U.S. economy, and some lawmakers are pushing for changes to the legislation. For example, some members of Congress have proposed amendments that would protect U.S. workers and environmentalists from the effects of the agreement.

The administration is likely to face a tough fight in Congress, and it may need to make significant concessions to ensure that the legislation passes. However, the administration is confident that it can win over enough lawmakers to pass the legislation, and it is already working to build support for the bill.

In the meantime, the administration is pushing ahead with its trade agenda. The White House has already signed a new free trade agreement with Jordan, and it is reportedly close to signing another agreement with Peru.

The administration is hoping to use these agreements to build momentum for its trade agenda, and it is hoping that Congress will be more amenable to the legislation now that the election is over.

However, the administration may have to wait a while for Congress to act. The legislation is likely to be a top priority for lawmakers in the new Congress, and it is likely to face a tough fight in both the House and the Senate.

The administration is aware of the challenges it will face, and it is already working to build support for the legislation. However, it will need to be patient and diligent if it hopes to pass the legislation in a timely manner.

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ILWU Reading List

Over the years, several books have been written about the ILWU. The following list, compiled by ILWU Director of Educational Services Gene Vraas, details the author, the publisher, price, main subject or theme, and availability of these books. These and other publications about the ILWU can also be read at the ILWU Library.


Bulcke, Germain. Longshore Leader and ILWU-PMA Arbitrator. Bancroft Library, Regional Oral History Office, University of California at Berkeley, 1984. The oral history and anecdotal account of Bulcke’s San Francisco career as a member and officer of the ILWU. University libraries.


Fox, Joan. editor. A History of Federated Auxiliaries of the ILWU 1934-1984. Federated Auxiliaries, 1984. A thorough compilation of histories of ILWU local auxiliaries, for ordering information or availability contact ILWU Auxiliary #3, c/o ILWU Local 19, 3440 E. Marginal Way South, Seattle, WA 98134.


Magden, Ron. A History of Seattle Waterfront Workers 1884-1934. ILWU Local 19 and the Washington Commission on the Humanities, 1991. An invaluable account of longshore unionization in the Northwest, particularly Seattle and the Puget Sound region. Available by mail from David Vigg, Sr., ILWU Local 19, 3440 East Marginal Way South, Seattle, WA 98134 (checks or money orders only in the amount of $5.00 per copy, payable to the ILWU Local 19 Centennial).


Many of these new, used and out-of-print books are available through Powells.com, the Internet sales arm of Powell’s books. ILWU Local 5 represents the workers at Powell’s, which is the largest independent bookstore in the country. If you go to www.ilwulocal5.com and click the “Bookstore” button, you will be linked to Powell’s.com. When you get to Powell’s through our local link, the money you spend goes directly to Local 5 members under a profit-sharing arrangement in their contract.