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Local 10 commemorates anti-apartheid boycott

by Tom Price

Local 10 members and friends jammed the Henry Schmidt room at the local hall Dec. 3 to remember the union's struggle against racism in South Africa. Twenty years before, the Nedlloyd vessel *Kimberly* remained tied to Pier 80 in San Francisco for 10 days while rank-and-file longshore workers refused to discharge its South African cargo. At that time, the white minority government of South Africa maintained a vicious system of racial separation called apartheid.

Each crew dispatched refused to work the vessel. Word spread along the Coast, and the growing movement against South Africa's racism took heart from the actions of the workers. Across the bay students at the University of California, Berkeley occupied the steps of the administration building the next spring and built a shanty town, which they occupied until brutally removed by the campus police. ILWU International officers Jimmy Herman, Rudy Rubio and Curtis McClain attended their rallies. Even former ILWU President Harry Bridges came out of retirement to join the demonstration. The students demanded the university rid itself of investments in companies that made profit off the institutional racism.

"Local 10's struggle against apartheid began in 1958 with Bill Chester, later International Vice President, and at that time Regional Director," Local 10 retiree Leo Robinson, a veteran of the boycott, told gathering. "He belonged to the United Negro Congress, a black workers' organization, and raised the question of apartheid, the first time it appeared in the records of the ILWU."

Robinson and former Local 10 member Larry Wright (now in bosses' Local 91) and others formed an education committee in 1976 to explain apartheid to the members. Wright and longshore Local 19's Bill Procter, clerk's Local 34's Eddie Gutierrez and Local 10 retirees Herb Mills and Howard Keylor and other veterans attended the celebration. Local 10 BA Jack Heyman chaired the event. Members attending got their books stamped for education credit.

The union's history against apartheid goes back deep and wide. The Longshore Caucus called for a boycott of South Africa in 1962 and in December of that year Local 10 members refused to cross an NAACP picket line protesting apartheid cargo on the Dutch ship *Raki*. Two years later the union opposed political trials of black South African dockers. The ILWU's International Convention in 1973 called for strict economic sanctions on South Africa to "take the profit out of racism and the employment of slave labor."

In January 1977 the hapless *Kimberly* experienced her first trouble when she arrived in San Francisco with South African cargo.

"There was a picket line thrown up around Pier 27 on Easter Sunday, and we didn't work it," Robinson told the gathering. "Five thousand people from the community showed up so we stood down on health and safety."

Harry Bridges' "On the Beam" column in the June 25, 1976 *Dispatcher* said it all:

"For years, all Americans with a shred of decency have understood that the situation—in which a tiny minority of white settlers completely control the destiny of millions of blacks, totally excluding them from power—could not go on forever even though the whites had created what seemed to be a foolproof police state.

"But everyone knows that it is bound to fall....The only question, really, was would the white South



ILWU contingent marches through UC Berkeley's Sproul Plaza as part of the anti-apartheid demonstrations of 1984. In front of the banner (left to right) then-International Secretary-Treasurer Curtis McClain, International President Jimmy Herman and International Vice-President Rudy Rubio.

Africans have the good sense to give up gracefully in order to minimize bloodshed..."

Cracks began appearing in the

apartheid system in the late 80s. Nelson Mandela, imprisoned for 27 years, was released Feb. 1989. One of the first things he did was thank the

ILWU, and he became an honorary member of Local 10 in June 1990. He was elected South African president in 1994. Apartheid was abolished.

Progressives must battle the Social Security myths of Bush regime

By Mark Gruenberg
PAI Staff Writer

WASHINGTON—With partial privatization of Social Security a top goal for George W. Bush and Republicans next year, a panel of economic experts said progressives must debunk right-wing myths about the program—and raise financial questions about privatization that Bush and the GOP avoid. At the Nov. 18 symposium at the Center for American Progress, a liberal think-tank, they offered different ideas on how to do so.

Social Security privatization, featuring diversion of one-sixth of its annual payroll tax revenues into Wall Street-managed "private investment accounts," is one big item on Bush's agenda.

The day of the symposium, Senate Majority Whip Mitch McConnell (R-KY) continued to push the Bush myth. "The Social Security system is a speeding train heading for a brick wall, and must be set right for future generations," he said on the Senate floor.

But privatization costs at least \$2 trillion—to pay for benefits for seniors and about-to-be seniors—and the right wing is avoiding the implications of that expense, the panel said.

Even more, they pointed out, Social Security does not need to be "fixed" because it is not—contrary to what the right says—running out of money. That's one myth they said progressives must dispel.

"First, we have to get the basic facts out," said Dean Baker of the Center for Economic Policy and Research. "The Social Security shortfall is modest"—less than one percent

of gross domestic product—and will not be fully felt until at least 2043, after most Baby Boomers die. That impact is less than the new defense spending over the last four years, Baker noted.

Another myth Baker blasted is the claim that investing Social Security proceeds in the stock market, as advocated by Bush and his allies, will give large returns. He said Bush projects a seven percent annual return on investment of Social Security's money, channeled through the private accounts, from the stock market.

But the market's long-term return, Baker noted, is at most five percent. Economist Christian Weller added brokers' fees would take 20 to 30 percent of the money flowing to private accounts.

Besides the negatives of the Bush/GOP privatization plan, the panel said Social Security's defenders must also stress its positives, which privatization threatens.

They include the system's progressivity, which Congressional Black Caucus Foundation economist Maya Rockeymoore said particularly aids lower-income groups, notably women and minorities. Other plusses are its universality, its guaranteed income and its guaranteed cost of living increases, all of which are lacking in private pension plans, Weller noted.

"Disadvantaged people will have a triple or quadruple whammy from privatization," in the form of higher taxes to pay for the transition costs, less progressivity, a higher retirement age, which cuts out African-Americans who on average die sooner than whites, and lower benefits,

Rockeymoore added.

"A lot of the individual account (privatization) proposals blow up the program in order to save it," added Brookings Institution fellow Peter Orszag. Progressives must get that message out, he said.

But the four differed on how to do so, even as Rockeymoore pointed out that privatization backers will have the next six months in the GOP-run Congress for their scare tactics.

"Our most important job is to get people the facts. Right now, we have most of the public thinking that in 10 or 20 years Social Security won't be there," Baker said.

Rockeymoore noted putting Social Security money in the stock market "is sexy and captures attention" of voters, but did not offer an alternative. But she said taking the message that Social Security does not need a major overhaul means getting outside the Beltway.

"We deal with national organizations here and assume they're reaching out to their affiliates," she added. "But those organizations have to lean on their grass-roots operations, so that we can shut down the Capitol Hill switchboards with phone calls from irate folks."

Orszag and Miller advocated educating the media. Both said media outlets are uncritically reporting the right-wing myths and pro-privatization campaign, without asking questions about how to pay for Bush's partial privatization plan.

"We need to educate women's groups and younger" people, Weller added, since both also benefit from Social Security.

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Teamster organizer assassinated in El Salvador

By David Bacon

As evening fell on Nov. 5, Gilberto Soto received a call on his cell phone at his mother's home in a working-class neighborhood of Usulután, El Salvador. Unable to understand the caller, Soto stepped out of the door of her house to get better reception.

In the street outside three men lay in wait. According to witnesses, they ran up to Soto and shot him in the back, and then fled in a car and bicycle as he lay bleeding on the pavement. Soto was taken to a local clinic, where he died shortly afterwards.

A dead body on a Salvadoran street—an assassination by anonymous murderers who then vanish—is not unusual in El Salvador, where violent and sudden death have been a plague for decades, through a bloody civil war and even into a new era of supposed peace. But Soto's death was no ordinary assassination, nor someone settling some old political score. Although he'd been a supporter of the FMLN after leaving his country in 1975, this was not the likely reason why three thugs pumped bullets into him as he stood on his mother's doorstep.

Chuck Mack, president of International Brotherhood of Teamsters Joint Council 7 in northern California and Director of the union's Port Division, figures Soto was murdered for his union organizing work. It was part of a new Teamsters international campaign to organize port truck drivers, from the docks of Elizabeth, New Jersey, where Soto had been working, to those of Central America, where he met his end.

"The fact that he was not robbed, the fact that he was talking to workers in the area about their conditions of employment, the fact that he was a Teamster organizer talking to workers in that country, seems to be the motive," Mack said. "There's no proof or evidence that the companies are behind the assassination, yet. But we will also be sending a delegation of our own to El Salvador, to develop our own facts and assessment."

Meanwhile, IBT President James Hoffa and AFL-CIO President John Sweeney have met with the Salvadoran ambassador to the U.S., Rene Leon, to demand a full-scale investigation. The Teamsters turned down an offer by A.P. Moller, parent company of the Danish shipping giant Maersk Corporation, to investigate Soto's murder.

"This murder investigation is best left to the Salvadoran authorities who have indicated their willingness to accept assistance from U.S. intelligence and law enforcement agencies. If the Salvadoran police engage in a coverup, we will seek the assistance of human rights organizations with a track record of integrity and independence," Mack said in a Teamster press statement.

The Teamsters sent a 10-person delegation, including Congresswoman Linda Sanchez (D-CA), to El Salvador to meet with government officials there to discuss the investigation. Sanchez is one of 72 members of Congress to sign a letter to Secretary of State Colin Powell asking him to ensure that sufficient U.S. resources and personnel be made available to the Salvadoran government to aid the investigation. The Teamsters, joined by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union and the International Longshoremen's Association, have also offered a reward of \$75,000 for the apprehension of the people responsible.

Soto had returned to his native country just days before. His visit to his family was a brief prelude to a series of meetings he'd set up before leaving the U.S. In calls to El



Gilberto Soto

Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras Soto had sought to contact harbor drivers, who ferry shipping containers to and from the ships in port.

This was an extension of his work for the Teamsters in the U.S. For the last four years Soto and other Teamster organizers have sought to build ties with U.S. drivers who do the same job, often for the same shipping companies that employ their coworkers in Central America.

In El Salvador port drivers have a long history of fighting Maersk, the corporation that has resisted the organizing efforts of truckers around the world more than any other. Three years ago, a hundred drivers for Bridge International Transport (BIT) were fired when they tried to win a union contract, and their organization was destroyed. BIT is owned by Maersk, and hires the drivers who deliver the containers to the company's container ships as they sit at the dock.

The terminations made big political waves in El Salvador. The fired unionists approached the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF), an umbrella group for transport unions around the world.

The ITF brought some of the Salvadorans to Denmark to put their case before the Danish Transport and General Workers Union. Maersk has its world headquarters in Copenhagen, and corporate representatives, forced to respond to the exposure of the firings in the press of their own home country, called the drivers thugs and terrorists. But Maersk did admit that the manager of its Salvadoran trucking facility was no longer employed there. The workers, however, remained fired.

When Soto began making calls to El Salvador three years later, asking non-governmental organizations to search out the fired workers and set up meetings with them, he was unearthing a piece of history that union sources suggest Maersk officials would prefer remain buried. And when Soto made calls looking for Maersk workers in Honduras and Nicaragua as well, it likely set off alarm bells, at least in the local offices of BIT, and perhaps even in Copenhagen itself.

In its campaign to help the Salvadoran truckers, the ITF organized other meetings with Maersk employees from many countries. At one meeting, U.S. Teamster leaders Chuck Mack and Ron Carver heard for themselves about the price paid by those in Central America who opposed the Danish conglomerate.

Hundreds of drivers do the same labor in the U.S., ferrying the containers to and from Maersk vessels. These workers, however, aren't employed directly by the company or its subsidiaries.

Instead, they own their own trucks, or at least they do in theory. In actual fact, they're heavily indebted to banks and finance companies that loan them money to purchase their rigs. The drivers have to pay all the costs of operating them—diesel fuel, insurance, parking charges—everything. By the time the bills are paid, the average take-home earning for a driver is \$8-9 an hour, making them the lowest-paid big-rig drivers in the U.S. It is a huge group, numbering 50-55,000 people nationally. Some 12,000 work in the port of Los Angeles/Long Beach alone, with about 3100 in Oakland, 1800 in Portland, and 2800 in Tacoma/Seattle, according to Bob Lanshay, a Teamsters port organizer.

Every morning, harbor truckers bid for the right to pick up a container from Maersk subsidiaries like Pacific Rim Transport International, HUDD, or BIT. If the dispatcher gives them the load, they have to wait for hours in front of a terminal to pick it up or drop it off. Dozens of rigs in huge lines, their motors idling, stretch for miles in front of the gates to the docks before they open every morning, in ports from coast to coast. By the time their day ends, most drivers have put in as many as 16-18 hours.

But because they're owner-operators, these workers have no rights under much of U.S. labor law, including no right to overtime pay. They're not covered by wage and hour protection since they supposedly work for themselves. They only have workers compensation if they buy their own policy, an expense most can't afford. And most importantly, the National Labor Relations Board says they're not workers at all, and therefore aren't covered by the laws that protect the right to form unions. In fact, the federal government says that if drivers even try to agree with each other on a price to charge the shipping companies for carrying a container, they're in violation of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, passed originally to restrain monopoly corporations. The fines and jail time they might incur by violating the act would break any self-employed truck driver.

"This is what deregulation did to port truckers in the late 1970s and early 1980s," Mack explained. "Their conditions are at the bottom of those for all truck drivers. It's basically the exploitation of an immigrant work-

force, one that doesn't have much in the way of a voice."

Soto himself was not a harbor driver, although in ports like Los Angeles hundreds of his fellow countrymen are. Instead, when he arrived in the U.S. in 1975, he got work as a garbage collector, a waiter and cook, and a factory worker—nothing like his career as a bank teller in El Salvador. Finally he landed a job in a factory where the Teamsters had a contract. He became a shop steward, and then was elected president of Local 11, the first Latino to head a Teamster local in New Jersey. He later went to work as an organizer for Hospital and Healthcare Employees Local 1199 SEIU, returning to the Teamsters as a business agent, and then international organizer, four years ago. In the meantime, he put himself first through community college, and then earned a bachelor's degree in political science.

Soto joined the group of Teamsters organizers helping port drivers around the country, as they began to organize a national network, despite enormous legal obstacles. For the last decade, without the right to form unions or bargain, drivers have nevertheless organized associations and tried to get the shipping companies to deal with them. These efforts have escalated as oil companies began raising the price of diesel fuel to unheard-of levels, cutting deeply into drivers' income.

Maersk soon became notorious for punishing workers who helped organize these protests. In 2000, in Oakland, California Naim Sharifi, an Afghan university graduate, began petitioning for price adjustments to compensate for fuel costs. Sharifi, who died three months ago, called himself "one of the top drivers" for Maersk's PRTI. The company rejected the workers' petition, and eventually the drivers organized a brief work stoppage. Afterwards, Sharifi said, "I knew I was in trouble. Management had a different attitude toward me."

In September that year, the Teamsters organized a rally in the port to protest the bad conditions, and Sharifi spoke for the drivers. As he did so, PRTI officials looked on, an act that would constitute illegal surveillance if the workers had rights under the National Labor Relations Act.

"The next day they called me into the office and cancelled my contract," Sharifi remembered. "They said, 'We don't have to give you a reason. We don't need a reason.'"

When the ITF planned a series of

continued on page 7

ILWU mobilization carried the f

By Tom Price

ILWU members and retirees from all divisions took weeks or months off work to fight corporate power in key election states. About 300 participated in the union's expanded Nov. 2 election campaign by traveling to Ohio, Nevada, Iowa and Wisconsin. Others stayed in their own states and helped secure them for Kerry and win many local races.

The commitment to participate in the elections had been made at all levels of the ILWU as far back as the 2002 longshore contract struggle. The 2003 International Convention made the defeat of the Bush regime its major priority. That was followed up by action at the Longshore Caucus last spring, where the Coast Legislative Action Committee recommended a large-scale siege of the "battleground states," those states where there was no clear leader in the race for the presidency. Members from all branches of the union responded, packed their bags and off they went.

Peter Peyton, co-chair of the Coast Legislative Action Comm., stayed behind to coordinate the effort. The members organized themselves into 11 teams and divided up the work of calling on union members in the battleground states.

"Because our job is to unload a ship, that means we get people together, get paper work, move move move. We're probably better organized than most people at getting things done," said Peyton, who also serves as secretary of marine clerks' Local 63.

Local 63's Connie Chaney worked in Columbus, Ohio. She expressed shock at what had happened to the middle of the country during the last few years, especially during the last four.

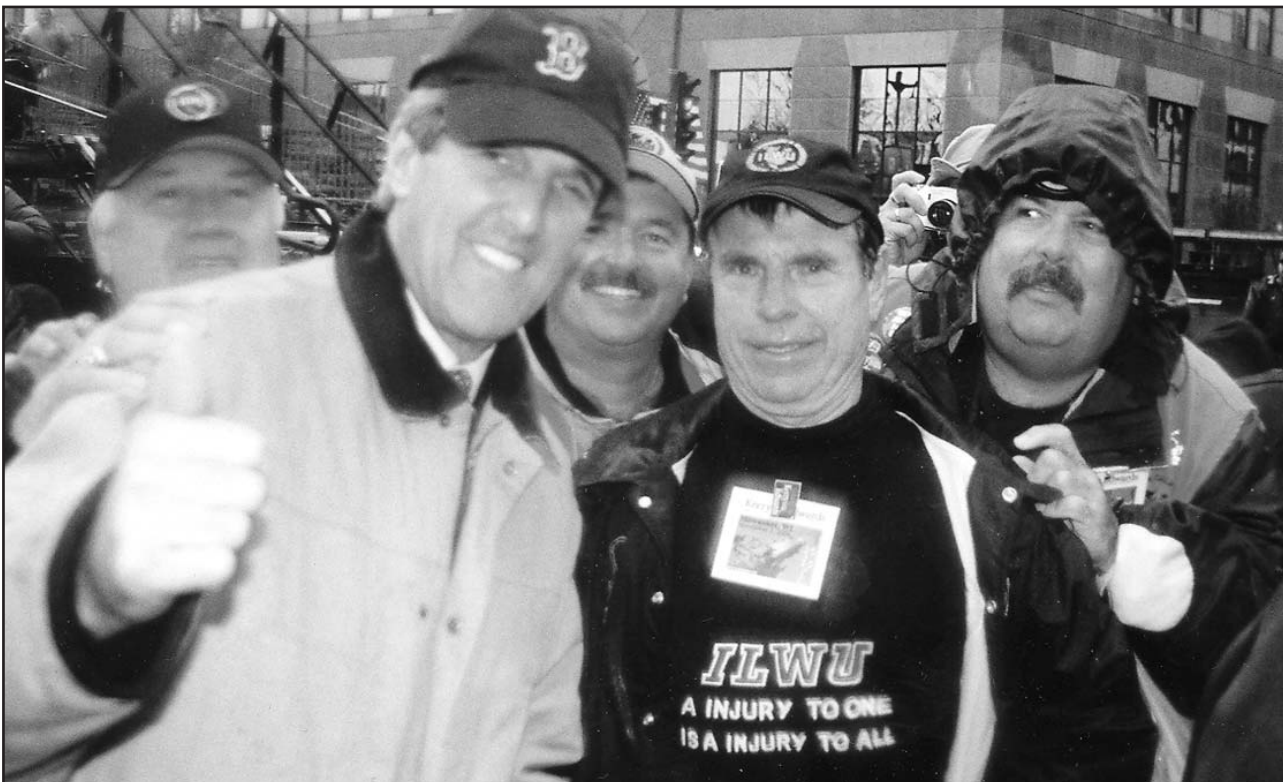
"Right now there are some very angry working class people out there and they don't understand what's happening," Chaney said. "What I saw was something I've never seen in my 54 years on planet Earth. Poverty right here in America is as bad as what we see across the water on TV. These are people who have worked all their lives for a decent retirement, for a wage and a means for their children, and it's all been flushed."

Chaney saw the effects of corporate globalization up close and personal. Ohio lost about 250,000 jobs during the first Bush term. Three-quarters of those jobs were in the manufacturing sector. Another 11,800 workers lost their jobs in August.

"I did a lot of canvassing," she said. "A lot of people wanted to phone bank, but I didn't want them to think I was just another solicitor on the phone. It was more fulfilling to talk to somebody face-to-face."

Chaney would finish her list of 40 union households and hurry back for more.

"I've seen peoples' houses with the door knobs hanging off the door, windows busted out in freez-



John Kerry ignored his security to take a picture with an ILWU team. Left to right: Edward Jeffrey, Local 63; Kerry; Marc Anthony Cuevas, Local 54; Louis Hill, Local 94; James Long, Local 63.

ing weather," she said. "It wasn't a bunch of kids out partying that knocked the windows out. Older people lived there. My thought was 'What are these people going to do when it gets colder?' I talked to people forced off their jobs before it was time to retire and their medicals all shot up. I couldn't believe this was happening in America."

"I saw college-degree children working in McDonald's. They were thrilled to have a job. I think he said he made \$8 an hour. I saw kids saving their money so they could move out of Ohio and get a good job and send money back to their families."

"They don't know what to do," she said. "They have a lack of trust in everything because they've been lied to."

Rather than despair, Chaney brought a new resolve back with her to Los Angeles.

"I was hurt by seeing Americans living like that," she said. "I did not believe it, and I was a social worker with the county [Los Angeles] before I came to the waterfront. I thought I had heard every sad story, but there you didn't hear it, you saw it. It gave me the oomph to come back home and do everything I can the rest of my life and reach out to my fellow Americans. I don't care what Oprah builds in Africa, my money going right here. It's a disgrace with how the government hit us by shipping work across the water."

Back home Chaney serves as representative to the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor and

volunteers for everything else she can.

Carlos Torres, out of warehouse Local 6, went to Ohio's Montgomery County.

"It was a great experience and I wouldn't hesitate to do it again," Torres said. "We were two weeks in a place called Fairborn, outside Dayton. The town only had 32,000 people. For that small town, we had 150 people from different AFL-CIO unions. The place was so inundated with campaigning that people were fed up, not only were union people calling them, but Republicans and special interest groups were calling them, knocking on their doors. They were really fed up, many said 'don't call me, don't knock.'"

Torres serves on the Local 6 Executive Board and is a trustee and a shop steward at his house. He's a 20-year veteran of the union.

"The timing was a problem," Torres said. "If we and the AFL-CIO had been out there for earlier to get people registered, it would have been better. We were trying to get the undecided, but most of them had made up their minds. I think Kerry's campaign had forgotten that a lot of these people had their union meetings in churches, the churches back there are upset about abortion and think Kerry supports same sex marriage. The churches were giving out lawn signs and they were telling people how to vote. The religious influence was really bad for us. Kerry's campaign forgot the unions were strongly influenced by the church."

Like many of the ILWU travelers, Torres wasn't afraid to voice his criticism of the Kerry campaign.

"One of the things Kerry said is that we will count every vote, well, these provisional votes weren't counted until Thursday, if at all, but Kerry conceded the election before they were counted," Torres said. "Even four years after the Florida election mess, we're still voting in most states with the same systems we had then. With the new machines, some hacker could get into it and there's no paper trail. I'd like to see some uniformity in the way we vote nationwide. But it was an eye-opening experience, I'm glad I did it. To me, it was well worth the trip."

Local 63's Patricia Tuck captained the Reno, Nevada Team.

"We all pitched in, whether it was canvassing, sweeping the floor, or taking someone to vote," Tuck said. "We're talking about people from all different unions, cultures, a variety of ages, abilities, and no one ever once said 'I can't do it,' everyone said 'I'll try it!' I took computer lessons on the side so I could do computer work. I saw postal workers who would come in after walking all day and then walk until dark canvassing."

"I worked with sheet metal workers, ironworkers, CWA, teachers, laborers, painters, asbestos workers," Tuck said. "A sheet metal worker was there when I started in August. He'd be there on Monday morning, and on Friday afternoon he'd go down the hill to Sacramento. We all assumed he was going home, but we found he was going down the hill for chemotherapy."

"People touched my life to the point where I will never forget them. I've already been in contact with many of them," Tuck said.

"The support from the other unions was amaz-



Marc Anthony Cuevas

A Kerry-union rally in Wisconsin.

fight to the battleground states

ing. They were so union at heart. One of the good things in Reno is that the local people who supported labor got elected. On any given day we had 200 union people in the hall, you'd hear 'Are you coming back in two years for the Senate race?'"

Tuck also found a lot of ILWU support already in place in Reno.

"Joe Wenzl [Coast Committeeman] sent me a list of active and retired ILWU members in the Reno area," Tuck said. "I sent out 60 letters asking for their help. My first call was from the daughter of a woman 80 years old. She said her mother couldn't get out of bed, but if she could she would be right with us. Another retiree had Parkinson's disease. He said he couldn't talk much on the phone, but he could still stuff envelopes."

Tuck spent 17 days in Arkansas two years ago working on the Senate race for Mark Pryor.

"I was in Reno one week shy of three months, started off slow, six days a week, eight to 10 hours, in the end it was 19 hours a day," Tuck said. "I wasn't the only one, we were all running on empty. I was really proud of how hard everyone worked. I left there a better person for it."

Ted Sadler, from longshore Local 13, went home to Cleveland as captain of his traveling team.

"In the two-and-a-half weeks I probably talked to close to 1,000 people, through canvassing, meeting union people and envelope stuffing," Sadler said. He saw the poverty in the area.

"They lost 250,000 jobs in Ohio and you can see it in their faces," he said. "There's some hopeful young people, but there's a lot of people in their fifties, and they're laid off and where are they going to go?"

Sadler felt he was bringing something back home with his ILWU buddies.

"The ILWU, as the socially conscious union that it is, has once again risen to the occasion. However effectively within the framework of the [electoral] game that we're allowed to play, we rose to the occasion. Strangers, guys from the CWA who had been members for 30 years, came to me and said, 'You guys set it on fire!'"

"We came in Oct. 17, the next day we were eating oatmeal in a little greasy spoon," Sadler said. "We were yakking with these motherly waitresses, they're talking back, 'How cool, you guys are longshoremen. We're glad you're here.' One guy there says we should come to the City Council that night. I had printed up excerpts from Spinner's [ILWU International President James Spinosa] message to the membership from that month's *Dispatcher* reiterating why it's so important that Bush not get elected because of what he tried to do to us on behalf of the corporations during our [2002] negotiations. So I gave that to the city council people and then went to the Ritz-Carlton 'martini hall of fame' and passed out the leaflets."

"I still think there were election shenanigans," Sadler said. "Kerry rolled over like a cheap SUV in a tight turn. That left a bad taste in my mouth. They didn't count the provisional ballots, in one county they sealed up the counting house with armed guards. Something is rotten in Denmark and the people don't want to smell it. It scares me because it almost mirrors the shit right when



(Left to right): Victor Valazquez, Local 13; Congresswoman Stephanie Tubbs-Jones; Teamster's Local 507 Secretary-Treasurer Al Mixon; Auxiliary 8's Shannon Donato; Local 13's Melody Jeffries.

Donato gave the Congresswoman a longshore worker's hat to give to Kerry. "I put a business card inside it with a note to Kerry," Donato said. "It read: 'Dear JFK: Port security is national insecurity. ILWU says inspect all containers.' Kerry looked right at us and repeated what we said during his speech, and later came right into our crowd to shake hands."

Hitler was getting in, there was some ugly stuff that went down, the fix was in and nobody said nothing about that.

"We can learn something from the Ukrainians, they had a general strike when their election was fixed."

Clerks' Local 40's Dawn Des Brisay stayed in her own state and worked on the campaign full time for four months.

"We went out and talked to union members about why we thought Kerry would best serve workers," Des Brisay said. "Twice a month we handed out a flyer tailored to each individual union at their work sites. We designed flyers that talked about healthcare, port security, jobs, and we'd go the jobsite and made sure they got it in their hands."

Des Brisay serves on her local's executive board and is vice president of the Columbia River District Council.

"It's important that we play an active role in labor struggle, whether it's walking on a picket line or working in our community, there's a lot the ILWU can do," she said. "Now I'm on the holiday gift drive."

Local 13's Paul Sanchez captained one of the Las Vegas teams. Like the Ohio teams, he was impressed with the union turnout and dismayed by persistent stories of election irregularities. But his criticism of the Bush agenda is as strong as ever.

"It took the working class 10 years to get carpal tunnel disability and the Bush administration got rid of it right after they took office," Sanchez said.

"Bush has hijacked the word democracy, he's hijacked the word spirituality, he's hijacked the word patriotism, and if you don't think like him you're un-American," Sanchez said.

As a marine vet, Sanchez knows you need a good reason to start something as serious as a war. But Bush's supporters have strange reasons for the war.

"I'm a practicing Roman Catholic and in my church we were praying to stop the war. Some of these

fundamentalists are praying for Armageddon. They're praying for the apocalypse!" Sanchez said. "What are these people thinking?"

Longshore Local 23's John Reed was captain on Torres' Dayton Ohio team.

"It was great to see how organized everything was. We had it down to a neighborhood, a street and a family," Reed said. "It was good to get to work with other unions and members. We talked to only union families, and we found there wasn't a whole lot of support for unions there."

"With Ohio we were trying to get across how hard they'd been hit with the outsourcing of jobs, and the Bush administration was giving corporations giant tax breaks to do that."

Reed wants to do it again, with a few changes.

"We would like to get there a few months earlier and get involved in the registration process," he said. "That's the time we think we could be most effective in planting bugs in their ears."

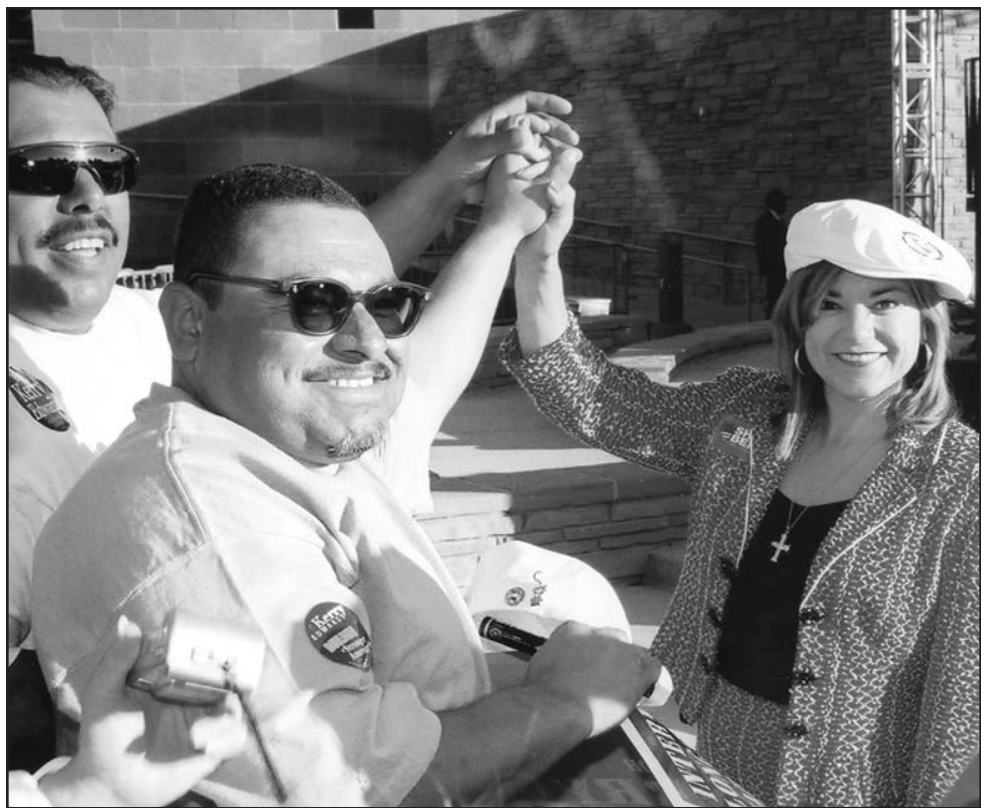
James Long began his career in longshore Local 10 about 15 years ago. He transferred to Local 34 five years ago, and then transferred to Local 63, a year and a half ago. His team went to Wisconsin.

"It was the experience of a lifetime," Long said. "We worked a whole lot longer than we normally would. Our team was involved in security with four Kerry events in Wisconsin. In Milwaukee there were 7,000 people involved in one rally. It was terrific. We all stood out in the rain seven hours to get to get a picture of Kerry. Kerry looked out at the audience and said he'd never forget the people who stood out in the rain. We asked for a picture, and the Secret Service said there was no time. But Kerry reaches over, grabs Ed Jeffrey's camera and says, 'Yeah, we got time.' And his staffer took the picture."

"In Green Bay we started at nine in the morning and worked to 11 at night. They asked us to set up these pens with police steel barricade pieces. We found a lift and I jumped on it and fired it up. We moved a huge number of these things and then set up the stage. Me and Ed and a guy from AFSCME went to a Dick Cheney rally. We were surrounded by Secret Service and cops and there were only three of us. A whole bunch of people with crosses around their necks said they'd pray for us. We thanked them."

"I'm really interested in doing this again in two years for the mid-term elections. So many people are single-issue oriented, Bush is able to get them because it's simple. It was brilliant the way they were able to turn Bush's bad military record into a good record and attack Kerry's record."

"We're all disappointed. We would like to see Kerry inaugurated in January. We did what we needed to do. We did something nobody ever did before. We'll take this and build on it, every local office, House and Senate. We'll keep it up."



Southern California Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez (right) joins longshore Local 13 members Socorro Fimbres (left) and Angel Blanco in Las Vegas to get out the vote.

Soto assassinated

continued from page 3

20 nationwide rallies highlighting Sharifi’s termination the following year, a Maersk attorney called the group’s head in London, David Cockroft, and told him Sharifi was being investigated by the FBI as a possible terrorist. While Middle Eastern and south Asian immigrants were targets of FBI sweeps in general that year, some wonder how Sharifi, who fought the Soviets in Afghanistan, made it onto the feds’ list of subversives.

Sharifi wasn’t unique. Frank Misterka was denied work by BIT in Baltimore for participating in protests the same year. Gene Suggs in Nashville helped organize a work stoppage in 2000 over high fuel costs and low pay. When it was over, BIT blacklisted Suggs and other active participants.

In Houston, workers tried to get a “bill of rights” from the port authority, but when they put Teamsters bumper stickers on their rigs, they were told, “take off the Teamster sticker, or take off the BIT placard.” In Hampton Roads, Virginia, BIT terminated the contract for Robert King, and HUDD, another Maersk subsidiary, cancelled that of Paul Barnum, for the same crime of organizing.

The worst retaliation has come in Miami. There workers organized a 2004 stoppage at the same time as drivers in Oakland, Charleston and other ports. In Oakland, the port got an injunction that forced them back to work after eight days and filed a lawsuit against the personal assets of three individual truckers who had stepped forward as spokesmen, for damages arising from the action. The Teamsters and the ILWU provided legal support for the three truckers and put political pressure on the Port and City of Oakland, resulting in withdrawal of the suit.

In Miami, Maersk and the Port of Miami filed a lawsuit against the

truckers. Maersk lawyers argued that workers had “held meetings and communicated with each other” and “passed out flyers,” thus violating anti-trust laws. They demanded immediate action from the courts because the truckers were “small and independent businesses without substantial financial resources to pay damages ... even if their tractors and other assets were seized.” The suit is still pending, but the parties have gone into mediation to try to resolve the matter.

This fall the Teamsters asked Cornell University professor Lance Campa to document the abuses in a report on human rights violations by Maersk. Campa’s investigation found that, despite anti-trust law, workers “had rights under international human rights law of association, of self-organization, of free expression and other means to try to achieve their goals.” Maersk, he concluded, was violating accepted international human rights standards.

Some observers call Maersk a company with a split personality, since not all its workforce suffer the same conditions or labor under the same anti-labor policies. About 100 drivers in Oakland, and 50-60 in Seattle work directly for the company, under a Teamster contract the company inherited when it bought SeaLand’s trucking operation. The ILWU negotiates with Maersk as part of the multi-employer group, the Pacific Maritime Association. And in Denmark, as well as Europe generally, the company enjoys a benevolent reputation. There unions have established rights and conditions for port drivers far in excess of those in the U.S., Central America or other parts of the world.

But according to one union observer, “The company may have good relations with organized workers, but it wants to keep its non-union workers non-union.”

Helping port drivers marks the start of a new approach to organizing in the Teamsters.

“We’ve recognized with these multinational corporations that we cannot deal with them effectively even nationally,” Mack said. “We have to develop a program that is international. We’re not on the verge of organizing drivers in El Salvador, Central America or other parts of the world. But we’re attempting to work with workers in those countries, to share information, provide help, and get

their ideas and perspectives. How do we deal with these multibillion-dollar, multinational corporations? How do we end the exploitation of these drivers? It’s a worldwide problem.”

Soto’s job was to help a group of these workers with no rights, against a company with a long track record of opposing any of their efforts to organize. Bob Lanshay calls him “a great guy, someone who didn’t have any enemies.”

Well, not exactly. Somebody was threatened enough to murder him.

ShopUnionMade.org

By now the holiday shopping frenzy has reached maddening levels. The stores are jammed with cheap imports if you can even get a place to park. You might even end up at Wal-Mart! But you can avoid all that and find the Union Label in cyberspace at www.ShopUnionMade.org

What to get for that right-wing brother-in-law? How about some union coffee? From the site you can order 100 percent union coffee from Hawaii. How about a union-made computer? Same site. How about a sea cruise? You can book a trip to Hawaii on a union ship with a real American flag at the mast! And there are ILWU hotels in Hawaii and union airlines to take you to the nearest embarkation port.

Orders can be sent via UPS, a Teamster outfit, directly to whoever you want to surprise.

The AFL-CIO’s Union Label and Service Trades Dept. launched the site Sept. 7. Its secretary treasurer, Matt Bates, explained why the site is needed.

“Shoppers spent \$56 billion in Internet sales last year,” Bates said in a press release. “The web site will reach millions of people, 24-hours a day, with a quick and convenient way to shop union. The public is ready for this, people have seen millions of good jobs disappear and they are looking for ways to take a stand and make a difference.”

The AFL-CIO is sponsoring a “Buy Union Week” Nov. 26 through Dec. 5 and will make the site a corner stone of that campaign.

ILWU Book & Video Sale

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

BOOKS:

The ILWU Story: 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. **\$7.00**

The Big Strike By Mike Quin: the classic partisan account of the 1934 strike. **\$6.50**

Workers on the Waterfront: Seamen, Longshoremen, and Unionism in the 1930s By Bruce Nelson: the most complete history of the origins, meaning, and impact of the 1934 strike. **\$13.00**

The Union Makes Us Strong: Radical Unionism on the San Francisco Waterfront By David Wellman: the important new study of longshoring in the ILWU. **\$15.00** (paper-back)

A Terrible Anger: The 1934 Waterfront and General Strike in San Francisco By David Selvin: the newest and best single narrative history about the San Francisco events of 1934. **\$16.50**

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

VIDEOS:

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

Life on the Beam: A Memorial to Harry Bridges A 17-minute VHS video production by California Working Group, Inc., memorializes Harry Bridges through still photographs, recorded interviews, and reminiscences. Originally produced for the 1990 memorial service in San Francisco. **\$28.00**

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Ex-Docker writes British rust bowl saga

The Factory

by M.J. Carden

www.publishamerica.com

Baltimore, 2004, 291 pages,

ISBN 1-4137-0733-5

reviewed by Chris Carlsson

This novel is set in a small machine factory in England in the early 1970s. It begins with a young man, terribly disaffected after years of rote, mind-numbing schooling, getting a job from the local employment office and showing up to work with a cautious enthusiasm about his new adulthood. In very short time he is introduced to the insanity and brutality that rules the roost in this particular factory, a perverted dehumanization that is the norm in factory life more generally.

I had the pleasure of meeting the author, and even staying at his house in Liverpool for a few days, back in 1999. Carden was one of the main organizers of an ultimately unsuccessful effort to protect the unionized dockworkers of Liverpool. In that capacity he had plenty of chances to see up close and personally the ways traditional union structures—and the people who rise to lead them—can become obstacles to workers asserting their own power.

In this story, the daily brutality directed by the shop steward and his loyal followers against a worker who didn't fit in (but was one of the most skilled and productive), leads that worker ultimately to a gory suicide in the factory. The young man, the "apprentice," speaks out and sparks a conflict, enflaming the consciences of the rest of the workforce who can no longer tolerate the pigheaded meanness of the factory's "leaders." Against the violence of their own shop steward and his men, and the weight of the owners, managers and union leaders, the workers go on strike. Thanks to the calm, experienced leadership of an old hand, who had been a union leader but had withdrawn from union politics in disgust long ago, and the rock solid participation of all the women on the shop floor, the workers organize themselves to take direct action, ultimately seizing the factory and occupying it.

The wildcat occupation immediately transforms the workplace. Petty feuds and routine sexism give way to camaraderie and mutual respect sprinkled with occasional flirtation. Work is reassessed and reorganized to accommodate the needs of the workers for human pacing and reasonable productivity demands. Within a couple of days, they are producing better quality and taking much greater pleasure in their work—and their workmates. Long overdue maintenance is done, the exhaust system is repaired, and everything is cleaned more thoroughly than it has been in years.

But the men who remain loyal to the shop steward, a corrupt lout named McCabe, depart the factory and occupation. McCabe's power is nullified by the newly animated shop floor democracy and he and "his men" opt to join the exiled managers outside. Later, when the factory is retaken by the police, the shop steward and his men scab on the wildcat strike that continues outside in the winter cold. The union's local leader shows up to try to repair the relationship between himself and the bosses, his union and their company. But as the workers discovered while they held the plant, the union has already been privy to company plans to close the factory and ship off the machinery to India. The local president's power—and with it, his aspirations to climb the social hierarchy—has been destroyed as surely as has the leverage of the workforce.

An interesting subplot follows the

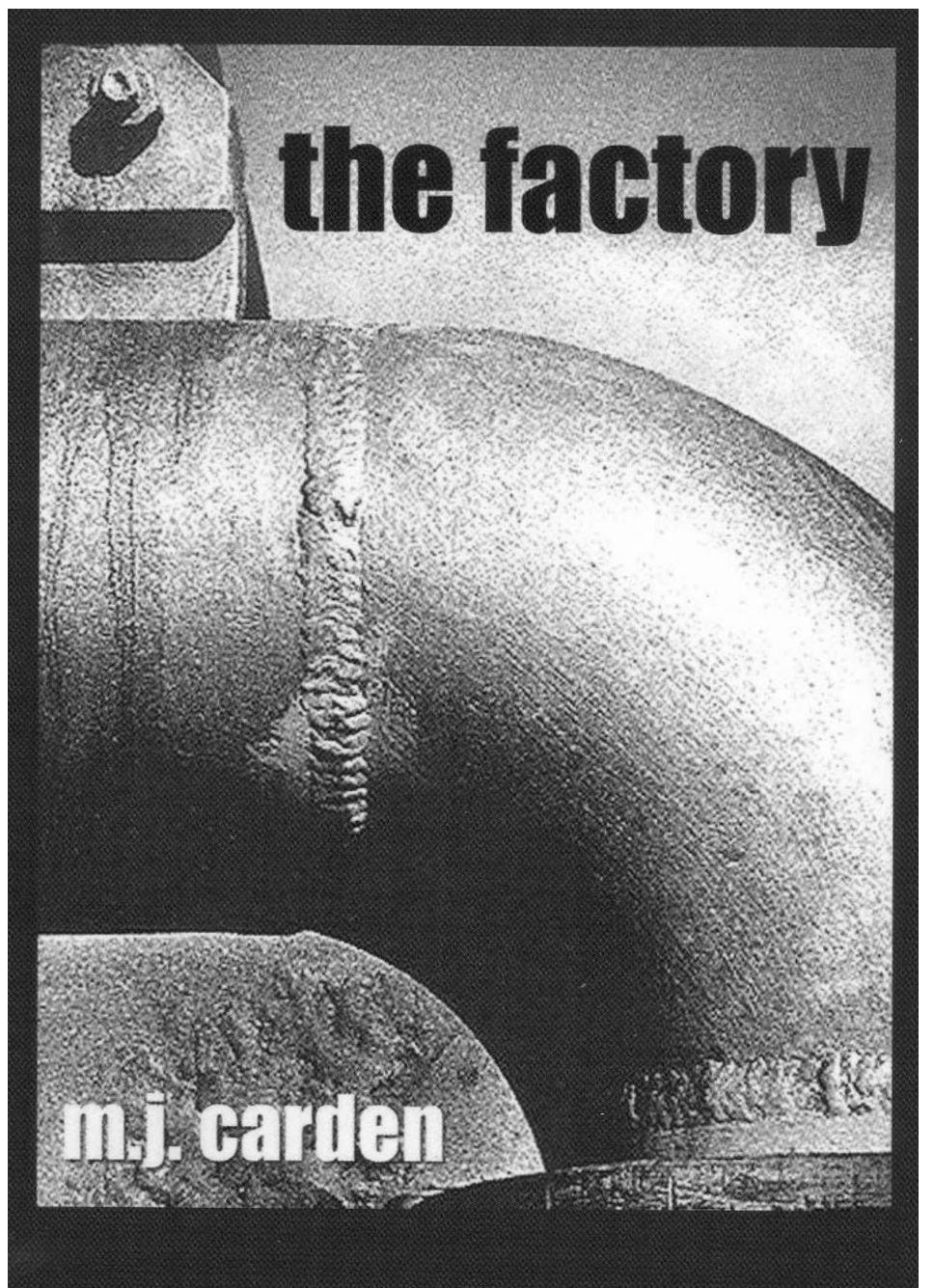
"apprentice" as he is seduced by a local Trotskyist political party while simultaneously beginning a romance with one of his young female coworkers. It doesn't take long before the political hacks flatter him so much that he is fully "captured" by them. We see his transformation into ideological robot through the eyes of his new—and quickly former—girlfriend.

Carden's real-life experience with workers' direct democracy in the heat of a wildcat strike brings his story to life. After a somewhat ponderous and overwritten beginning, the narrative begins to crackle. For a dissection of the real dynamics between workers, owners, managers and unions, you could hardly do better than this novel. Additionally, by having the workers engage in a factory occupation, a crucial and largely forgotten tactic in the workers' arsenal is reintroduced to a new generation. Carden does not refrain from occasional political analysis masquerading as fictional prose. He ruminates:

"The system would never tolerate strikes or any other acts of defiance but they positively encouraged wage-militancy. Occupation was a rebellion that faced up the power of capital by capturing one of its pawns, and as such it could never be tolerated. Occupation was never about money, it was about challenging the very essence of the capitalist's power. To challenge capitalism over money was to play their game. It was perfectly acceptable, tolerated and often welcomed as a vindication of capital's all-enveloping greed. Everyone, in this context, could be seen as a capitalist. To want money and want more money was a genuflection to capital and its ways. Occupation was bad. But these men and women knew what they were involved in. Above all they were practical people. They could build canals in the desert."

By the time the story reaches its climax, which is far from heroic or satisfying for fans of workers' revolt, Carden finally discloses his deeper analysis of trade unionism:

"Trade unionism was in its most influential phase, so some said, and yet the seeds of future treachery [which Carden and his mates had to face in the late 1990s] had been sown from their inception. A constant struggle ensued between the leadership and the led. The former strove to improve their own condition beyond the class they claimed to represent whilst the latter sought to move beyond the denominator of wage slavery. And all the time the official union basked in the glory of heroic struggles that had, more often than not, been fought without their union's support. More often than not they had opposed all opposition. Caught in the mid-stream of betrayal, the union leadership moved lightly amidst both worlds, and, having two paymasters, ever mindful of past and present deceptions, ever fearful of exposing their true intent. Some battled



for their class and their class only, finding themselves increasingly excluded from the gravy train of influence and power as they confirmed their willingness to occupy the past and future glories of revolutionary labour. This betrayal had begun before the birth of general unionism in 1889 and their representatives invaded the movement with their class betrayal of pseudo modernism in which, forever uncomfortable with conflict, they forged pacts with capital. Explained away with a confused intellectualism that appeared to offer the spoils of revolution without the struggle, these intermediary bosses spread division and defeatism with every act they pursued. With the passage of time they openly assumed the rigours of serving capital as if this was the true struggle to fight, ever so softly and meekly, whilst always allowing the sovereignty of capital to prevail. Each decade brought their movement closer to their maker as they assumed the collar and tie, the suit, the houses, the fine tastes and mannerisms of the boss class. This imagery of betrayal would soon be celebrated openly in the victory of style over content as it evolved in the official unions under the aegis of a 'new union-

ism.' The age of conflict was over, they declared. And for many it had never really begun.

The strike eventually ends badly, the apprentice betrays his mates and his girl. By the end of the book, reminiscent of the Paul Schrader movie "Blue Collar," the possibilities of revolt seem diminished, the individuals who revolted this time are vanquished. The plan to "offshore" the machinery has been derailed, but there is no more factory either. The apprentice, who has been a cipher throughout the story, representing types and behaviors, is finally in the last line of the book given his name... as he awaits assignment at the employment office, the same place where we met him with so much potential at the start of the novel.

Hints of our post-Fordist world appear, but this story feels rooted in a past that has almost vanished. The factory and community it describes have been uprooted and "de-industrialized," and the way most people experience work has evolved with the advent of global production lines. Or has it?

That may be Carden's most important point. Things cycle, specific individuals and conditions change, but the deeper logic is still as iron-clad as it was in the period his novel describes. And the way out is still as difficult and contradictory and conflicted and often defeated as his book so ably illustrates. But there is a way out. And we do learn. And books like this are important contributions to that process, best known as *history*.

Chris Carlsson is Director of Shaping San Francisco (www.shapingsf.org), a multimedia excavation of the lost history of San Francisco, with a dedicated chapter on the ILWU, and another on the 1934 strike. Short video clips of the '34 strike, as well as interviews with Herb Mills of Local 10 and Peter Mendelsohn of the Tenants and Owners Opposed to Redevelopment can be found in the Shaping San Francisco movie collection at www.archive.org.

2002 on video

The ILWU Longshore Division is producing a film about its 2002 contract struggle. Any and all video footage or still photos members or their friends may have from that time that can add to documenting and portraying the many facets of that nearly year-long conflict would be helpful in the production. Please send them to the following address and let us know if you need them returned.

ILWU International, Attn: Steve Stallone
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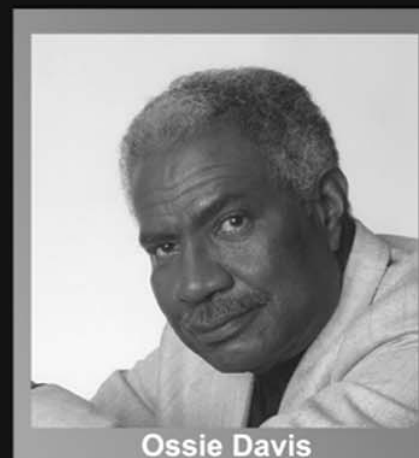
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