Local 6 retiree Evelyn Johnson told the Local’s Convention to “fight for what you want and need,” page 5

Local 5 President Kristi Lovato (center) chairs the Warehouse Caucus. International Vice President Joe Radisich left, International Secretary-Treasurer Willie Adams is on the right, page 2.

Local 20 President Gary Harvey at the Warehouse Caucus.
**Warehouse Caucus meets in San Francisco**

Story and photos by Tom Price

Organizers, members and retirees from the ILWU’s Warehouse Division met March 20 to form a caucus that would discuss issues important to their members.

The Warehouse Division had not met as a group in four years. They discussed organizing goals, the need for common contracts, for research, for cooperation in bargaining, and for mutual support and communication. They also discussed the possibility of merging locals for greater strength, and jurisdictional issues.

“We need some dialogue today, we need to work on solutions and deal with problems,” International Vice President Joe Radisich said in his welcoming remarks. “I hope we can deal with solutions and think outside the box.”

The meeting was called by the ILWU Titled Officers and warehouse local Presidents Kristi Lovato, Local 5; Efren Alarcon, Local 6; Jeff Carter, Local 17; Gary Harvey, Local 20; and Luisa Gratz, Local 26. The caucus elected Lovato to serve as Chair. The International hosted the meeting, with Radisich and International Secretary-Treasurer Willie Adams participating. Coast Committee Leal Sundet brought greetings from the Longshore Division.

“We have to organize strategically,” Adams said. “The Rite Aid and Blue Diamond organizing will be the cornerstone of our new members—can that bring 1,200 new members into our union. The life blood of our union flows through the ports and warehouse division, it flows through the supply chain.”

The caucus devoted time to informal discussions as each local spoke to their experience.

“I hope we can get on-going structures that will help us back each other,” Local 6 Secretary-Treasurer Fred Pecker said. “We need to look for common contracts to become one voice at the bargaining table and become more cohesive. We need to relate local-to-local, because we all have issues with trust funds and area standards.”

“One of our difficulties is research,” Luisa Gratz said. “We don’t have the staff time for all the footwork. We also need to do corporate campaigns, where we deal with the company on a scale larger than just across the table. We have some jurisdictional issues with other unions, and we need to enforce area standards against employers who lower the bar for everyone with inferior standards.”

“We have so many of the same issues, but we don’t get together to talk to each other,” Local 17 Secretary-Treasurer Jack Wyatt Sr. said. “I look forward to more political action.” Local 17 Dispatcher /BA Everett Burdan said, “We often hear about important legislative bills after the fact. We don’t talk to each other politically.”

“We need to get our contracts together so we can compare them,” Gary Harvey said. “We need to help struggling locals. Organizing opportunities abound in our area, but we have no full time officers.”

“Right now 15 percent of our workforce is temporary workers,” Lovato said, noting that Local 5 has serious bargaining coming up, with health care on the table.

“Thanks to all the active members for getting this together,” Local 6 retiree Leroy King said. “If we don’t improve, we might just fade away. Right now, they come after pensioners’ benefits in negotiations. But we have 50 people coming to pensioners’ meetings. Sometimes that’s more than active members’ meetings.”

The delegates took on the difficulties of being a rank-and-file, democratic union.

“The Warehouse Division has to decide if it will remain rank-and-file, or hire experts?” Pecker said. “To train from the inside takes longer, but they don’t go on to other jobs, they remain rank-and-file.”

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ILWU raises support funds for family of slain unionist

by Tom Price

The family of Pedro Zamora Gonzalez, a Guatemalan unionist gunned down on Jan. 15, will receive $1,000 from the ILWU as part of a campaign headed by former Halliburton executive Bob McElrath to raise funds for affiliated unions around the world.

ILWU International President Bob McElrath presented the check March 19 while attending the International Transport Workers’ Federation Fair Trade Day breakfast meeting in Sorrento, Italy.

Zamora, the General Secretary of Guatemalan dockers’ union STEPQ, died in a hailstorm of bullets after he helped lead his union through a fierce police strike that included a police occupation of the port of Quetzal. The assailants ambulance his pickup and fired at least 100 bullets, 20 of which struck Zamora, including one point fire blank into his face. The murdered man was 9 months old, his two children who were in the truck. Other STEPQ unionists have received death threats. Zamora’s union, an affiliate of the ITF, has asked for support from all unionists and everyone interested in labor rights.

The ILWU, an ITF affiliate, has also responded in a Jan. 31 letter from President McElrath to STEPQ’s International President Bob McElrath to the incoming president of the government of President Berger of Senegal.

Zamora is said to be a popular organizer and respected union leader.

The ITF characterized Guatemala as “one of the most dangerous countries in the world for trade unionists, with many murdered each year.” The country has been in and out of civil war since its democratically elected president Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán was ousted in a coup d’état organized by the CIA in 1954.

The ITF has asked unionists to send letters to the Guatemalan government and provide an online link to make it easy at: http://www.itfglobal.org/solidarity/pedro-zamora.cfm.

STEPQ unionist Oscar Gonzalez met in Europe with unionists, human rights activists and members of government. He also met with members of the European Parliament and on March 15 the EU Parliament passed a resolution denouncing human rights abuses in Guatemala. The Parliament will send a delegation to Guatemala in April to meet with unionists and the government.

McElrath presented the check March 2007, the day before IAP took over services at Walter Reed led to a precipitous drop in morale and services at Walter Reed led to a precipitous drop in morale and services at Walter Reed led to a precipitous drop in morale and services at Walter Reed led to a precipitous drop in morale and services at Walter Reed led to a precipitous drop in morale and services at Walter Reed led to a precipitous drop in morale and services at Walter Reed led to a precipitous drop in morale and services at Walter Reed led to a precipitous drop in morale and services at Walter Reed led to a precipitous drop in morale and services at Walter Reed led to a precipitous drop in morale and services at Walter Reed led to a precipitous drop in morale and services at Walter Reed led to a precipitous drop in morale and services at Walter Reed led to a precipitous drop in morale and services at Walter Reed led to a precipitous drop in morale and services at Walter Reed led to a 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According to multiple sources, the decision to privatize support services at Walter Reed was caused by an outbreak of “highly suspicious” medical errors.

"Part of our mission on the Oversight Committee was to investigate what led to the breakdown in services," the letter continued. “It would be reprehensible if the debatable condi-
The Local 6 hall rocked with cheers as an oversized crowd of members, families, guests and retirees celebrated their union at its 60th Annual Convention Feb. 24 in Oakland and dedicated themselves to its future. The local will put this enthusiasm to the test this year as it faces heavy bargaining in its major contracts, in a climate of soaring health care costs and rising corporate greed.

“The 800-pound gorilla at the bargaining table remains—it is the upward spiral of health care costs,” warehouse Local 6 President Efren Alarcon said.

The Convention passed resolutions supporting: card check recognition, immigrant rights, a cutoff of Iraq war funding, speedy arbitrations and single payer healthcare. [See sidebar for details.] Local 6 officers reported to the Convention on the local’s achievements over the year. These included classes introducing new members to the union. More than 30 stewards and members received steward training, and more than 40 members were trained in bilingual classes to understand and apply family leave laws. Members ratified a dozen contracts over the past year and laid the groundwork for negating the big master contract this year. Members turned out in massive support for pro-worker candidates in last year’s elections, and Local 6 members played a big role in their communities. The local’s Activity Committee hosted four Saturday night get-togethers with food, raffles and televised sporting events.

“We need to return to our roots,” Secretary-Treasurer Fred Pecker said in the Officers’ Report. “We need to get back to a view of a collective outlook—a union outlook. A view of our futures together—not each of us by ourselves. The difference between an individual retirement account like a 401(k) and a defined pension plan is huge. The difference between personal medical savings accounts and comprehensive medical insurance is huge. We are the tide that lifts all boats. Together, we create strong communities, together we build a strong nation.”

A large number of guests attended, including ILWU International President Bob McEllrath, International Secretary-Treasurer Willie Adams and Arti Pulaski, Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the California Labor Federation. Coast Committeeman Leal Sundet and International Executive Board members Lawrence Thibeaus and Richard Cavalli also attended and spoke to the delegates. Cavalli serves as clerks’ Local 34 President, Jeff Carter, President of warehouse Local 17 also spoke, as did Sandra Andrews, aide to Congresswoman Barbara Lee.

International President Bob McEllrath had the crowd on its feet when he thanked Local 6 for its work in last November’s election:

“Last election we donated to 63 candidates, and out of those 56 won offices,” he said. “We took over the house, we took over the Senate, and Nancy Pelosi took over as Speaker of the House, the first woman to do that. This is a fantastic change for working men and women.”

National President Bob McEllrath was a good friend of [Local 6 retiree] Leroy King. She was called ‘unpatriotic’ by Dick Cheney. Can you imagine the Speaker of the House of the United States of America called ‘unpatriotic’? I look at it from the other side, and it’s some of the best campaign literature the Democrats can use. So let’s all keep looking forward, helping the Political Action Fund, let’s keep banging on the door when the election comes in 2008.”

International Secretary-Treasurer Willie Adams paid his respects to Local 6 leopards:

“I’d like to honor the brothers and sisters who have passed on, who set the table for us, and who aren’t here today. I call them ‘the Immortals,’” Adams said. “Lou Goldblatt, Keith Eckman, Curtis McClain, and others. The last immortal standing is brother Leroy King.

“I have to say to Fred Pecker, Efren Alarcon, the trustees, the BAs of Local 6—I want to thank you for all your hard work. Local 6 has been through some turbulent times, but you have stabilized the local. And to the membership—it hasn’t been easy, it didn’t happen by luck, it happened by skill and determination.”

Local 6 President Efren Alarcon asked the members for their involvement:

“We need you to participate and attend your membership meetings and know what’s happening with the local,” he said. “Because of the number of negotiations we have coming up, especially the master contract, which is 20 percent of our local, we need to prepare for a fight. We need to prepare for a strike. It is not our intention to negotiate a strike. It is our intention to negotiate a fair contract. It is a high priority of just about 98 percent of this membership that we keep and maintain the medical benefits that we have now. That’s about $917 a month. That’s about $5.29 an hour.

“If we didn’t have all this red tape we have with the HMOs, if we had universal health care, if we had at least half of that money going into our pockets that would be an additional $26. So again we ask you to live conservatively for the next four days and to prepare your finances, get them in line, no union has a magic wand.”

Convention Committeeman Leal Sundet offered support from the Longshore Division:

“I know you are entering your master agreement in April, the number one issue you will be facing will be healthcare costs,” Sundet said. “The same we will be facing in longshore in 2008. As you know the ILWU is for single payer coverage, and we are not there yet. So we will protect our Taft-Hartley plans.

“I want to promise all the resources of the longshore division in whatever help you need in preserving your health care. Because if it happens to you it will be happening to us.”

Al Perisho, President of the Southern Calif. Pensioners Group expressed the support of the pensioners:

“I look at the attendance this year and it’s good,” Perisho said. “I know you have a lot on your plates with these negotiations, and pensioners have a lot with our health plan, our pensions, and what people are trying to take away from us in this country. Yesterday on NPR they did a report by several think tanks that said we are paying more in this country than if we had a single-payer plan that covered everybody.

“We’re going to support your negotiations any way we can. You have friends in Southern California.
in the longshore division.”

Richard Cavalli brought greetings from Local 34: “We need to take back a message to all the places where we work,” Cavalli said. “The message is that the election victory in Nov. is just the first step. This needs to get back to the rank and file. The bottom line for us is to raise a few bucks, because that gives us access to politicians, whether we like it or not, and I don’t particularly like it, I’m not happy with the politicians we have. So if we can take from this convention that we have this first step done, we’ve got to get the next step, get legislation that allows unions to exist.”

Lawrence Thibeaux paid Local 10’s respects and offered an assessment of the health care crisis: “When I was a little boy we didn’t have for-profit hospitals,” he said. “If you were sick you went to the doctor and it didn’t matter if you had a nickel in your pocket. Now everything is for profit. Can you afford it? We have Schwarzenegger talking about mandatory health care. One of the things they all have in common is they’re trying to increase tax deductions for affordable health care. We have Schwarzenegger talking about mandatory health care. One of the things they all have in common is they’re trying to increase the customer base for the insurance carriers.

“We’ll never contain health care costs as long as there’s a profit motive behind healthcare. Because the health care provider’s first obligation is to his shareholders, not to the sick people. As long as we’re going down this trail where we buy into ‘affordable’ health care we’ll never have it.”

Art Pulaski brought greetings from organized labor in the state: “We at the California Federation of Labor have great admiration for Local 6, because we consider this union to be one of the great activist unions in the state,” he said.

“It’s not just a battle at your bargaining table for your members. Your members and your leaders are out there supporting and advocating for every other union. That’s what activism and militancy is about. One of the great values of this is that when your employers see your union activists supporting other unions, sees you active and strong in politics, and in Sacramento, your employer has more respect, and in fact more fear. We like employers that fear our union, right?”

Jeff Carter, President of warehouse Local 17, expressed his members’ feelings of solidarity with their sister local and gave a report on his local’s status.

“We believe we have turned the corner in L. 17, the dredging of the deep water channel at the Port of Sacramento brings great potential,” he said. “The Blue Diamond organizing drive in full swing. Our largest house, Sacramento Logistics, added 150 jobs in the last year alone.”

Carey Dall, International Organizer, gave an update on organizing drivers on Local 6 turf and introduced Shawn Roy, a general laborer at Blue Diamond.

“The reason we need to organize is that we have no voice,” Roy said. “We have no respect. We have bad pay and we’re not treated the way people should be treated. Blue Diamond has been cited by the NLRB with more than 20 violations and they have threatened us with moving the plant.

“We need employer neutrality. Neutrality keeps employers from intimidating employees.”

Sandra Andrews, aide to Congresswoman Barbara Lee, (D-CA), brought greetings from the Congresswoman: “Thank you for doing everything you do, and congratulations on your 60th anniversary” Andrews said, quoting Lee. “I have a certificate to present on your 60th anniversary, because you are the backbone of what we do in our district. As your Congresswoman says, the way Calif. goes the rest of the nation goes.

“I. Congresswoman sent a statement in support. It reads—‘It is my pleasure to give the following statement in support of warehouse union Local 6, ILWU members gathered here today on the occasion of your 60th annual convention. I whole-heartedly support the efforts of the ILWU and others who share your vision, and have come together to congratulate your hard work and dedication in improving working conditions for all people. I am confident that as you begin another year of organizing and advocacy, and you are the greatest advocates we have.’”

Bob McEllrath finished his speech with words of support for the local: “We need the support of the rank and file,” he said. “Today I guess you’ll be working on some resolutions and some things to take to the table. Whether you get your point across, win or lose in your debate, once this convention closes up get behind your officers, get behind your bargaining team, show support, don’t let them crack us, don’t let them think the membership isn’t in support of the union. Win lose or draw, when this convention closes we are united and we are going to get a contract. The International officers and the International union are here to support you.”

THE CONVENTION PASSED A NUMBER OF RESOLUTIONS TO SERVE AS GUIDES FOR THE FUTURE:

Policy Resolution 1 In Support of the Employee Free Choice Act: Resolved:
That ILWU Local 6 supports bipartisan legislation introduced in Congress, the Employee Free Choice Act, which would authorize the National Labor Relations Board to certify a union as the bargaining representative when a majority of private sector employees voluntarily sign authorization cards, commonly known as “card check” recognition, provide for first contract mediation and arbitration and establish meaningful penalties when employers violate workers’ rights to join a union; and
Be it Further Resolved:
That ILWU Local 6 communicate the need for Employee Free Choice Act to all of the Congressional delegates from the Congressional districts in our jurisdiction.

Policy Resolution 2 In Support of Immigrant Workers: Resolved:
That ILWU Local 6 stands in opposition to the criminalization of any immigrant in the U.S. regardless of documentation; and Be it Further Resolved:
That ILWU Local 6 stands opposed to any kind of guest worker program; and
Be it Further Resolved:
That Local 6 stands in solidarity with any worker who organizes on the job anywhere.

Policy Resolution 3 In Support of Cut Off in Funding for the Iraq War: Resolved:
That ILWU Local 6 communicate its opposition to continued war funding—except to bring our troops home safely, and take care of them when they get here—directly with our Representatives in Congress; and Be it Further Resolved:
That we call upon Bay Area AFL-CIO Labor Councils, the ILWU International and others to join us in this resolve to “Bring Our Troops Home Now—Money for People’s Needs, Not War—Solidarity with Iraqi Workers.”

Policy Resolution 4 In Support of Speedy Arbitration: Be it Resolved:
That cases approved by the General Executive Board for arbitration will be assigned to an arbitrator within 60 days of the approval by the General Executive Board.

Policy Resolution 5 In Support of Single Payer Health Care Resolved:
That the ILWU Local 6 endorses single payer health care and SB 840 in particular and encourages our sister locals and the International to do the same.
WALTER REED PRIVATIZED CARE continued from page 3

Employees, representing the former Joint Commission on Veterans Affairs, are on the committee's move in a March 21 press release.

The Walter Reed privatization issue could have been prevented.
The origins of the ILWU in Hawaii sprang from a mix of militant unionism and the need to secure a higher wage and the rich and often bitter background of the Islands' agricultural and industrial life. A strike occurred in 1880 and 1884. It is one thing to trace the development of the ILWU in Hawaii labor movement. It is another to understand it in terms of the complex racial and ethnic forces at play during—and after—those early years.

From 1880 to 1938, the sugar and pineapple plantations provided the bulk of employment in Hawaii, and sugar was the driving industry. In 1919, the sugar owners chose not to rely on imported and indentured labor but to diversify their investment in pineapple plantations. The sugar owners' decision to diversify their investment in pineapple plantations is the turning point of the ILWU's development in Hawaii. The sugar owners' decision to diversify their investment in pineapple plantations is the turning point of the ILWU's development in Hawaii.

Sugar strike on the big island, 1946.

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A Helping Hand...

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

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**ILWU Book & Video Sale**

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

**BOOKS:**

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 by special arrangement with Belenium Books in San Francisco, which specializes in rare publications and documents about radical and labor history. $18.00

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. $5.00

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

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