IEB reviews activities, sets policy and direction

The ILWU International Executive Board met in its San Francisco headquarters Dec. 7 and 8 to review the union’s finances, political and legislative program and its organizing efforts.

International President Bob McEllrath opened the meeting by introducing the officers of the ILWU’s new affiliate, the American Radio Association, the radio operators aboard ships (see sidebar page 3). As a maritime union with a long-time relationship with the ILWU and a tradition of rank-and-file democracy, both sides agreed it would be a good fit.

The union trustees met the day before and scrutinized the union’s budget and expenses. They reported to the board that the union was in the black and on track to build its reserves. International Secretary-Treasurer Willie Adams walked the board through the details of the expenses for the first three quarters of 2006, explaining particulars and answering questions.

Clerks’ Local 63 Secretary Peter Peyton, who along with Secretary-Treasurer Adams and the union’s Washington, D.C. office, had helped devise the union’s political action strategy and fundraising, reviewed the results of the union’s 2006 activities and presented an outline of the union’s plans for the 2008 election cycle.

Peyton said that in the 2004 presidential election the ILWU set a goal of raising $221,000—but used the money wisely and successfully. More importantly, the union got more of its members involved in the campaigns. Of the politicians the ILWU gave money to, 57 won their races and only 12 lost. Peyton pointed out that the ILWU led the way in backing California Congressional candidate Jerry McNerney who went on to defy the Blue Diamond almond processing campaign in Sacramento and the Rite Aid warehouse campaign in Lancaster, Southern California. Organizing Director Peter Olney gave a brief presentation on those two efforts and how the employers’ aggressive anti-union activities in both cases would be blunted if Congress were to pass the Employee Free Choice Act. The bill, sponsored by Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Congressman George Miller (D-CA), would change current labor law and level the playing field for workers trying to organize.

The board went on to pass a Statement of Policy in support of the Rite Aid warehouse campaign in Lancaster, Southern California. Organizing Director Peter Olney gave a brief presentation on those two efforts and how the employers’ aggressive anti-union activities in both cases would be blunted if Congress were to pass the Employee Free Choice Act. The bill, sponsored by Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Congressman George Miller (D-CA), would change current labor law and level the playing field for workers trying to organize. The board went on to pass a Statement of Policy in support of the bill (see page 3).

The Hawaii Local 142 delegation updated the board on an issue that had been discussed at length at the International Convention in Vancouver, B.C. last May—the closure of the Del Monte pineapple fields and cannery. At the convention delegates from the 700-employee operation reported that in February 2006 the company announced it was closing up shop and leaving Hawaii in two years and moving their pineapple production to Guatemala where labor costs are lower.

The announcement came as a surprise to the workers. In 2004 they negotiated a five-year contract to give the company stability in its costs. “Del Monte had been in Hawaii for 100 years and they indicated they would be here for another 100 years,” Local 142 President Fred Galdones said.

The local immediately went into “effects” bargaining, asking the company for enhanced severance pay, extended medical benefits and financial assistance with keeping the workers’ plantation housing and community. Del Monte would agree to nothing, so the convention passed a resolution supporting the workers’ proposals, and the delegates signed a petition calling on the company to agree to the union’s proposals. The local continued talking with the company, but on Nov. 17 Del Monte announced it was accelerating its closure plans and would shut down in 60 days. Again, the local asked for assistance for the hundreds of workers who not only faced unemployment and the loss of health care for their families, but possible eviction from their homes.

Again, the company has refused to make any commitments to the workers who built its business for decades. So in response the board voted unanimously for a Statement of Policy calling on ILWU families to boycott all fresh Del Monte produce (see page 3).

The board also reviewed the report of the International Balloting Committee that oversaw the vote count of the last union election. It agreed to set up a subcommittee to look at the IBC’s recommendations for a smoother and more efficient election process that would report back to the board at its next meeting April 12-13.

The IEB discusses the union’s political action plan. From left to right: Hawaii Local 142 representative Kenneth Inge, Columbia River Area representatives Jerry Yonen and George O’Neil, Puget Sound Area representative Max Vekich, IBU National President Alan Coté, and Northern California Area representatives Fred Pecker and Richard Cavalli.

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disciplining, demoting and interrogating workers. These included firing four workers, of these illegal employer tactics. In the meantime, it can enjoy notice promising not to misbehave galley. Other violations, such as threats and promises, are two years. If the decision comes unfair labor practice charges and get all. The average time between filing violate the law now and pay later, if at Congress aims to change that and gally. The ARA will retain its national offices, drawing more Board complaints. Current law not only gives employers free rein to poison the atmosphere before an election, but also builds opportunities for bureaucratic delay into the election process itself. The employer can challenge the composition of the bargaining unit, as Rite Aid did, or challenge the outcome of the election, tying the issue up in court and denying workers representation while they do so.

The Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA), sponsored by Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-MA) and Rep. George Miller (D-CA), would change the law by setting harsher penalties for employers who break the law during organizing drives; making card-check recognition the standard route into the election process itself. The company complied with the Board’s order to re-hire two fired workers—then illegally fired and disciplined other union supporters, drawing more Board complaints. Nevertheless, they were relieved to know they had at least two years to prepare themselves for the shutdown. They needed the time to find new jobs and possibly training for new careers, especially since most of them had little education and experience other than in pineapple work.

Local 142 started bargaining with Del Monte believing it had two years before the company would close the Hawaii operations. In the bargaining, Del Monte, directed by its corporate office, was giving virtually nothing additional to ease the workers in their transition from Del Monte, especially refusing to consider additional medical coverage protection, severance pay, or financial assistance to transfer Kauai Camp, as there were some 120 families, from the company’s control. In August 2006, the ILWU Local 142 filed an unfair labor practice with the Hawaii Labor Relations Board alleging unlawful conduct and unlawful bargaining. In September 2006, Fresh Del Monte Produce relocated the general manager in Hawaii to operations in Korea and appointed to the position the human resources director in Hawaii, who had little or no practical experience in pineapple operations.

As a sea-going officers’ union, the ILWU represents an extension of ILWU solidarity onto the high seas. “Bringing all the maritime unions together under one has been an idea the ARA has supported,” Steinberg said. “Philosophically we’ve been close to the ILWU’s anti-unionism, working for its members, protecting their jobs, livelihoods, medical benefits and providing a way to do so with dignity.” The company’s actions mean that all pineapple marketed under the Del Monte label will be grown outside of the U.S. The company has taken the technology and even seed material for the highly successful MD-2 variety of pineapple from Hawaii and the U.S. to grow in other countries where labor costs are cheap and labor standards are low.

Del Monte’s behavior contrasts with other plantations that have shut down in Hawaii and have provided for financial assistance for the workers and have cooperated with the union to help with the transition. Del Monte has demonstrated that it has no more use for Hawaii and, unless legally compelled, will likely not provide workers more any than it must under the current collective bargaining agreement. By its actions, Del Monte has shown that it is not a good corporate citizen.

Corporations that squeeze value from U.S. resources and labor and expand their business in other countries should be held accountable for their actions. The ILWU combats the actions of Del Monte and, because of the conduct of Del Monte in Hawaii and the parent company, ILWU members and their families shall boycott all products of Fresh Del Monte Produce, especially pineapple. The ILWU urges all who support justice to join in the boycott of Fresh Del Monte Produce.

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### Season’s Greetings from the International

#### Titled Officers
- Robert McEllrath - President
- Joseph R. Radisich - Vice President, Mainland
- Wesley Furtado - Vice President, Hawaii
- William E. Adams - Secretary-Treasurer

#### Administration
- Linda Kuhn - Office Manager/Executive Secretary
- Karen Coffey - Manager/Accounting Department
- Valerie Smith - Administrative Secretary
- Jorge Freiberg - Bookkeeper
- Nancy Legardy - Receptionist
- Frank Wilder - Clerical Assistant
- Rebecca Contreras - Administrative Secretary

#### Research and Education
- Russ Bargmann - Research Director
- Eugene Dennis Vrana - Director of Educational Services and Librarian

#### Communications
- Steve Stallone - Communications Director and Editor of *The Dispatcher*
- Tom Price - Assistant Editor

#### Washington, D.C. Office
- Lindsay McLaughlin - Legislative Director
- Kyle Weimann - Legislative Assistant

#### Coast Committee
- Ray Ortiz, Jr. - Committeeeman, California
- Leal Sundet - Committeeeman, Northwest
- George Romero - Benefits Specialist
- Robert Maynez - Administrative Director
- Haydee Lind - Accounting and Finance Manager
- Diana Gomez - Administrative Secretary
- Janice Smith-Yamagata - Coast Imaging Project Secretary
- Eddie Ko - Bookkeeper
- John Showalter - Public Relations Specialist
- Christine P. Lutz - Administrative Secretary

#### International Department
- Ray Familathe - Director of International Affairs

#### International Representatives
- Tracy Takano - Hawaii
- Mathew Yamamoto - Hawaii

#### Organizing
- Peter Olney - Director of Organizing
- Jon Brier - Puget Sound Organizer
- Agustin Ramirez - Northern California Organizer
- Rodolfo Gutierrez - Southern California Organizer
- Carlos Cordon - Southern California Organizer
- Mary Winzig - Columbia River Organizer
- Marcy Rein - Communications Specialist
- Carey Dall - Northern California Organizer
- Amy Willis - International Organizer/Researcher
- Katy Fox-Hodess - Project Organizer

#### International Transport Workers’ Federation
- Jeff Engels - ITF Coordinator, West Coast U.S.A.
- Peter Lahay - ITF Coordinator, Canada
- Lila Smith - Inspector, Puget Sound
- Martin Larson - Inspector, Columbia River
- Jose Perez - Inspector, Northern California
- Stefan Mueller-Dombois - Inspector, Southern California
- Carolyn Jones - Bookkeeper

#### Harry Bridges Building
- Victor Duran - Building Engineer
- Claude Caputi - Maintenance

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*Have a Happy and Safe New Year!*