



# *The* DISPATCHER

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## MAY 15-19, 2006

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

### INSIDE

Blue Diamond organizing action: Seeking sweet justice .....	page 3
Oral History: Curtis McClain, union and civil rights activist .....	pages 4-5
Training builds rank-and-file communications team .....	page 6
Saving Lives: ILWU moves to reduce port pollution .....	page 7
ILWU Canada grocery workers strike behemoth chain store .....	page 7



**Local 10 and peace protesters accept city offer****Oakland pays for police violence at port**

By Steve Stallone

Almost three years after the bloody police riot at the Port of Oakland that left nine ILWU longshore workers and dozens of anti-war demonstrators injured and scores of protesters and one ILWU business agent arrested, the City of Oakland finally settled the lawsuits against the police. The settlement included not only monetary damages for the injuries and constitutional rights trampled, but new, more restrictive policies on the Oakland Police Department's (OPD) use of force in protest situations. But the waterfront employers in the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) that colluded with the police in those actions have yet to pay for their crimes.

"The settlement of this litigation represents a total vindication of civil rights not just anti-war demonstrators but also ILWU members and other union workers," ILWU attorney Rob Remar said.

Shortly after the U.S. military invaded Iraq, peace activists organized a protest at the port to highlight war profiteering by some ship companies. SSA had recently received a no-bid contract to operate the Iraqi port of Um Qasr for the occupying

forces and APL had a contract with the U.S. government to ship munitions and other war materiel to Iraq.

Before the first shift Monday, April 7, 2003 they set up picket lines outside the gates at the Stevedoring Services of America (SSA) and American Presidents Line (APL) terminals. The protesters had organized their action publicly, advertising it through flyers and web postings. The employers and the police were aware of it and plotted their response in secret. Documents obtained through the lawsuits' discovery process revealed that representatives of SSA, APL, the Port of Oakland and the PMA met several days before the demonstration with the Oakland police. Together they toured the APL facility to prepare for the demonstration. Oakland Police Dept. Lieutenant Edward Poulson, in charge of the police response, was granted his request that an APL and Port representative be present at the police command center during the protest, and actually "deputized" an employer representative as part of the police "command and support team" to assist in arresting people.

The documents also show that the police were informed that ILWU longshore workers, upon seeing a picket line, would stand by until an arbitrator ruled on whether or not they were contractually required to cross the line. But at no point did the OPD, the Port of Oakland or any of the employers notify ILWU Local 10 of the meeting or communicate with the local's officials in preparation for the protest.

Instead, the documents show that the San Francisco Police Dept. told the OPD the Local 10 had taken a public stand against the war and that longshore workers would likely "sympathize with the protesters and participate in the direct action." Further, according to an investigative report in the May 18, 2003 edition of the *Oakland Tribune*, the OPD received an "intelligence" report from the California Anti-Terrorism Information Center (CATIC) five days before the demonstration. The CATIC, a state agency staffed with personnel from the FBI, the Defense Intelligence Agency and other federal, state and local agencies, warned the police the protesters might turn violent. The CATIC selectively gleaned information from activist websites and list-serves and intercepted email correspondence of ILWU members to support its notions of the protest and protesters.

The *Tribune* quoted CATIC spokesman Mike Van Winkle justifying his agency's tactics.

"[I]f you have a protest group protesting a war where the cause that's being fought against is international terrorism, you might have terrorism at that [protest]," Van Winkle said. "You can almost argue that a protest against that is a terrorist act."

With that kind of information and arguments the OPD greeted the demonstrators in full riot gear and armed with so-called "less-than-lethal" munitions—wooden and rubber bullets, concussion grenades and lead-shot filled bean bags. Longshore workers arriving for their morning shift at the APL and SSA terminals saw hundreds of people picketing the



Oakland police in riot gear and with gas masks prepare to attack protesters (in background with picket signs) at the APL terminal April 7, 2006.

gates and a line of trucks backed up down the road. They stood by a good distance away as local officers had instructed, awaiting the arbitration. But the police did not.

One police officer, using a barely audible bull horn, declared the demonstration an illegal gathering and ordered everyone to disperse. Then the police moved in formation toward the demonstrators with rifles drawn and aimed head high. Suddenly shots rang out and concussion grenades arced overhead and boomed. Protesters and longshore workers alike fell to the fire. Others were run into by cops on motorcycles, beaten and arrested. Local 10 Business Agent Jack Heyman, rushing to help his members get out of harm's way, was pulled out of his obviously marked ILWU Business Agent car, thrown to the ground, handcuffed and arrested.

Many of the injuries were severe enough to require hospitalization and surgery. Video and photos showed the police aiming at people's heads, in direct violation of the munitions manufacturers' warnings that such practice could result in death. Injuries to heads and shoulders confirmed the violations were common. The multitude of wounds in the back showed police were shooting at retreating people.

The next day's *New York Times* quoted OPD Chief Richard Word saying the police dispersed the crowd at the behest of APL and SSA. Outraged that ILWU members would be shot on orders from the employers, as if this were 1934 and Bloody Thursday once again, the Coast Committee fired off a letter to Oakland Mayor Jerry Brown and Chief Word. The union demanded an independent investigation into the incident that would focus on who decided the police should come to a peaceful protest armed with munitions, who gave the order to fire unprovoked and indiscriminately at demonstrators and workers and why ILWU officials were targeted for brutality.

While Local 10 and injured and

arrested protesters prepared their lawsuits against the city and its police department, Alameda County District Attorney Tom Orloff moved preemptively. He charged 24 protesters with failure to disperse and interfering with a business, and charged BA Heyman with obstructing justice and failure to comply with a police officer's order. Those charges were all eventually dropped.

From the day of the event Mayor Brown and City Council President Ignacio De La Fuente defended the police action, claiming they were responding to demonstrators throwing rocks and bottles. But as the case moved forward, the police department's own video showed no violence on the part of the demonstrators. Rather than go to trial without evidence for its position, the city offered an out-of-court settlement. In total the police use of excessive force on peaceful citizens exercising their Constitutional rights of free speech, assembly and dissent cost Oakland taxpayers \$1.25 million to settle 59 lawsuits arising from that day, not including attorney and court fees.

"City politicians spent all this money to suppress civil liberties and trade union rights when it could have gone to Oakland schools and paid teachers decent wages and benefits," Heyman said.

Closing the deal, the Oakland City Council voted unanimously Feb. 7 to pay up and get out of this embarrassing mess, all the while claiming they were not admitting guilt. Local 10 declared victory and voted to accept the settlement at its Feb. 16 membership meeting. Only the PMA, SSA and APL have yet to answer for their role in putting ILWU members and protesters lives and limbs at risk that day—so far.

"The documents we got from the police in this case show without a doubt how today's employers still turn to the police to enforce their power over workers just as they did in 1934," Heyman said. "We won't forget that."

**Local 10 antes up for jailed Euro dockers**

At their February monthly meeting, members of ILWU longshore Local 10 voted to send \$5,000 to the Belgian dockers imprisoned after the successful Jan. 16 protest against European port privatization in Strasbourg, France.

The ILWU and the MUA sent delegations to march on the European Parliament in Strasbourg along side dockers from ports all over Europe. They demanded the European Parliament vote down a proposed law that would have allowed ships' crews and non-union casual workers do the job of registered and trained union dockers loading and unloading ships. Union dockers see this as a backdoor legal maneuver to destroy their jobs, wages, conditions, benefits and the unions that guarantee those. They united and mobilized in a massive demonstration and work stoppages at many European ports.

The European Parliament voted down the privatization plan by a huge margin, but not until after police fired upon and tear-gassed the marchers. In the process 13 demonstrators were arrested and jailed. Eight Belgian dockers remain behind bars, separated from their families and unable to work to support them. The three Belgian docker unions are raising money for the families.

The Local 10 motion, besides sending the \$5,000 to help, also calls for other ILWU locals to contribute to the fund.

"The membership felt it necessary to give money in support of our brothers for the survival of the labor movement," Local 10 President Dave Gonzales said. "And they want others to join in the struggle."

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# Ferry workers blow the horn on Hornblower

By Marcy Rein

Union members who work the Alcatraz Ferry run on the San Francisco Bay have launched a fight for their jobs in the wake of the National Park Service's September 2005 decision to switch to a non-union contractor. They are drawing strong political backing as questions multiply about the new contractor's bid and the impact the switch could have on San Francisco.

The Blue & Gold Fleet has run the ferry to Alcatraz Island since 1994. It carries about 5,000 passengers per day with some 40 union crew members. The IBU represents the deckhands and the International Organization of Masters, Mates and Pilots (MMP) represents the captains, customer service reps, ticket agents and maintenance staff.

"The National Park Service's awarding of the right to negotiate the Alcatraz Ferry contract to Hornblower—a non-union dinner boat cruise company—is a shocking travesty of justice to our employer," said IBU Northern California Regional Director Marina Secchitano.

MMP tried unsuccessfully to organize Hornblower's San Francisco and Berkeley locations in 1998 and most ferry workers call it a cheap and anti-union employer.

"Hornblower employs mostly part-time people, and we don't need to be replacing union jobs with maritime McJobs," said Robert Irminger, an IBU deckhand with 25 years on the Bay.

To date Hornblower has provided no assurances it will hire the experienced IBU and MMP crews, though the unions have made repeated inquiries.

"Hornblower keeps saying they aren't ready to hire the workers, but we see them talking to boat builders and making all kinds of other preparations," Secchitano said. "We think their preparations should include us." Hornblower could take over the Alcatraz work as early as May 1.

The workers say that not only their futures but also the safety of future ferry passengers depends on keeping IBU and MMP crews on the boats going to Alcatraz.

Operating a ferry safely always requires local knowledge, but Alcatraz presents special challenges, said Capt. Tom Harlan, an MMP member.

"Alcatraz sits in the middle of the



Flanked by members of the ILWU Local 10 Drill Team, IBU No. Cal. Regional Director Marina Secchitano wraps up the Feb. 13 rally to keep the Alcatraz Ferry union. MMP Branch Agent Capt. Ray Shipway stands by the IBU banner.

eddies created by the mixing of the waters coming down from the San Joaquin and up from the South Bay," Harlan said. "The currents run six, seven, eight knots and vary depending on the tides. Every landing is different. This isn't a lake."

The deckhands, who tie and untie the ferries and load and unload passengers, need expertise too.

"It takes a lot of good common sense and experience to maintain the lines," IBU member Roger Lowe said. "Normally we have someone out there who has between 10 and 30 years' experience."

"With union wages you can raise a family in this job. That's how you can have people with this much experience," Lowe said.

The IBU and MMP members have taken their concerns to San Francisco's Port Commission and Board of Supervisors and to the city's representatives in Congress.

The Supervisors unanimously passed a resolution Dec. 6, 2005 that supported the retention of the IBU and MMP workers and called on the Port Commission to look at the impact Hornblower's takeover could have on the city.

Hornblower has yet to publicly discuss the specific ways it would change shoreside operations. Blue &

Gold runs from Pier 41 in the heart of Fisherman's Wharf, but Hornblower docks at the smaller Pier 31-1/2 a few blocks away.

"Pier 31-1/2 has none of the infrastructure of Pier 41 and we could be looking at massive traffic and parking problems," Board of Supervisors President Aaron Peskin told a Feb. 13 IBU/MMP rally.

"We are also concerned with the ancillary economic impacts of moving the service," Peskin said. "Now when you're a tourist from Peoria or Paris waiting an hour or two for the ferry, you buy from all the neighboring businesses."

Blue & Gold contends Hornblower submitted a flawed bid to NPS, so it filed a challenge in the Court of Claims in Washington, D.C., which hears all federal contract disputes. The challenge questioned whether Hornblower can deliver the new boats, repair the facilities and generate the revenue promised in its bid. Oral arguments in the case were heard Feb. 14.

The unions also took issue with the bid process, saying the Park Service failed to apply the Service Contract Act. The Act requires new companies taking over federal contracts to pay prevailing wages or pay wages and benefits at least equal to

those paid by previous contractors.

ILWU International President James Spinosa asked the Dept. of Labor (DOL) to determine whether the Act applies to the Alcatraz contract. DOL made a preliminary decision that it does, but the Park Service maintains the law doesn't apply to them and refuses to comply. Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) has continued to press the DOL for a final decision.

"We understand that they're trying to destroy high-quality union jobs on the Alcatraz route and replace them with jobs that have low wages and benefits, no dignity and no respect," AFL-CIO President John Sweeney said in a message to the Feb. 13 rally. "Those jobs on the Alcatraz route were IBU and MMP jobs yesterday, they are IBU and MMP jobs today, and they should remain IBU and MMP jobs."

After the rally, the workers underscored that point by going together to formally apply for the jobs. With the Local 10 Drill Team setting a spirited pace, they walked down the waterfront to the retired ferry Hornblower uses as an office. MMP Branch Agent Capt. Ray Shipway joined Secchitano in presenting Hornblower with 54 applications from IBU and MMP members.

## McCall Oil workers act as one, get the deal done

For the last year the 11 workers at McCall Oil and Chemical in Portland have stuck together, stuck to their guns and stuck their necks out when they had to. They saw their unity, persistence and determination pay off Jan. 31 when they ratified their first contract with the Inlandboatmen's Union of the Pacific, the marine division of the ILWU.

"We got this contract because we stuck together 100 percent. We also had the unwavering support of ILWU Locals 8, 5, 4 and 40, the IBU, Jobs with Justice and others in the labor community," said Charlie Finger, a member of the union bargaining team and maintenance man for McCall.

Finger and the 10 operators at McCall gained substantial pay raises. The workers' wages will increase more than 16 percent over the life of the two-year agreement. The contract provides much-needed seniority language to govern scheduling and vacation time, as well as a grievance process and a "zero tolerance for harassment" from "managers, supervisors, co-workers, customers, vendors and suppliers." This provision speaks to the key reason the McCall workers organized.

They work 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, handling ship fuel, diesel and asphalt. They fuel barges and tugs, many crewed by other IBU members. They

unload hot asphalt from rail cars, mix it to customers' specifications, then load it in trucks. The work requires knowledge and experience, and can sometimes be dangerous.

"On top of this, we had supervisors who would yell, scream and bully," bargaining team member Vicky Wintheiser said. "We just wanted to be treated decently."

The new contract also makes McCall a union shop where everyone is a member of the IBU.

"Despite McCall's insistence on remaining an 'at-will employer,' the bargaining unit was able to empower themselves with a union shop," said IBU Patrolman Mike Conradi, who

acted as chief negotiator.

In January 2005, all the workers at McCall had walked out on their boss to demand union recognition. They voted unanimously to become members of the IBU in March 2005, and they voted as a block to go out on a 36-hour unfair labor practice strike in December.

During the strike, McCall signaled it was ready to go back to the negotiating table. Even with the Christmas holidays stretching out the schedule, the two sides were able to reach a tentative agreement Jan. 19, after just four more bargaining sessions.

—Marcy Rein

## Candy is dandy but justice is sweeter

Blue Diamond workers, along with ILWU members, staff and friends, took advantage of heavy Valentine's Day traffic to leaflet at See's outlets in Seattle, Portland, Sacramento, San Francisco, Pasadena and Honolulu. Because See's uses Blue Diamond almonds in its chocolates, they asked the candy maker to "be a sweetie," use its influence as a big customer and ask Blue Diamond to change its anti-union ways.

Workers at Blue Diamond's Sacramento plant have been organizing since September 2004 to join warehouse Local 17. The company mounted an aggressive anti-union campaign that included firing four union supporters and threatening that people would lose their pensions and the plant would close. The NLRB issued complaints on 28 separate violations of labor law and held a four-day hearing in December. A ruling

could come at any time.

"The way jobs and everything are going in this country, organizing is our last line of defense against serfdom," said Local 19 casual Bob Simmons, one of the Seattle leafletters.

American Rights At Work launched its second e-mail alert for the Blue Diamond workers Feb. 14. The first alert, part of last year's "Halloween Howl for Justice," netted a total of 11,000 messages to Blue Diamond.

This newer alert has prompted 7,500 e-mails so far, including many personalized notes. "I run a company and feel the competitive pressures every day," said one.

"But I also believe that we must individually and professionally stand for something as big as the bottom line: that's people. If people feel the need to unionize, you and I should let them."

—MER



# Curtis McClain: union officer and

## Introduction by Harvey Schwartz

*In observance of Black History Month, this issue's oral history honors Curtis McClain, the union's International Secretary-Treasurer Emeritus who passed away last November. McClain was the first African American elected business agent of Local 6 (1960), President of that local (1969) and then Secretary-Treasurer of the International (1977). He retired in the latter post in 1991.*

*The historic intersection of the ILWU and the civil rights movement is dramatically illustrated in McClain's experience and in his numerous contributions. McClain was a pioneer worker for equal access to jobs in San Francisco and an early advocate for equality of opportunity in Local 6. He was an activist in "the Frontiersmen," a group of Local 6 African American members who initially sought black advancement, but ultimately achieved better understanding and more unity for all. This oral history emphasizes these aspects of McClain's long career of service to the ILWU.*

*During his years in Local 6 McClain worked closely with several of the ILWU's legendary figures. Among them were LeRoy King, Keith Eickman and Louis Goldblatt, who he followed as International Secretary-Treasurer.*

*The oral history below is a composite of two interviews with McClain. One is a recorded discussion I had with him in 1982 that dealt mostly with the Frontiersmen and with McClain's earliest days in Local 6. The other is a more far-ranging interview taped in 1969 that also focused on McClain's career in Local 6 and on civil rights issues.*

*The 1969 interview was conducted by Robert Martin of the Civil Rights Documentation Project in Washington, D.C. Many thanks to Joellen ElBashir, Curator of Manuscripts at the Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, for providing us with a copy of the transcript of that tape session.*

*The last three paragraphs in this article are from the 1969 interview. On one level McClain's parting comments there on social conditions in the U.S. and on American foreign entanglement might seem dated. However, looked at another way, their insight and their clear relevance to current issues is at once quite striking and more than a little troubling.*

## CURTIS MCCLAIN

Edited by Harvey Schwartz  
Curator, ILWU Oral History Collection

I was born in Akron, Ohio in 1925. I'm one of 19 children from three combined families. My father worked in the rubber plants in Akron—

B.F. Goodrich Co., General Tire, Firestone Rubber. I think it was the rubber industry that was responsible for his early death because of the impurities in the air and the bad conditions in the plants.

My father was one of many who worked in the mills grinding rubber and inhaling dust, dirt and fumes. He was a tire mold man, but he was not permitted to join the mold men's union. I often used to hear him talk about the good of a union, even though he did not belong to his, so this sort of stayed with me.

During World War II I was drafted into the Navy after I finished high school in Akron. Once we were loading ammunition on a ship in Seattle. We were working alongside ILWU longshoremen who were almost making more in a night than we were in a month. They were earning some \$50 a night and I was getting \$66 a month as a Seaman First Class. This interested me in joining unions upon my release from the service.

After being discharged from the Navy in San Francisco I became acquainted with a number of longshoremen who were also making pretty good money. This interested me a little more, I would say, because I already knew the importance of the union. I briefly attended the City College of San Francisco, got married when I was 21 and decided I should enter the workforce and provide food for the table. That's when I found out about the warehousing industry and that Local 6 dispatched people to jobs and color was no barrier. I went down to the Local 6 hall.

This was in 1946, shortly after I'd left the military. I was hired on a temporary basis by Schmidt Lithograph, a multi-union house in San Francisco. They had a crew of 16 or 17 warehousemen, but they had a total workforce of 600. I was the only black person there for nine years. I was sent out from the Local 6 hiring hall to run a freight elevator for three days. The company specified that this was a temporary job because someone was returning from vacation.

When the person who was to return from vacation had an accident, John Munson, the company supervisor, asked me to work steady. He also kind of pissed me off by implying that I would either come late or wouldn't show up. "Don't forget," he said, "we always start at the regular time."

I went into the paper seasoning department. My job there was also under Local 6. Paper has all this moisture and they had all these racks and things. You had to hang the paper to dry it out or to add moisture before it went into the press room for pressing. The work was heavy, hot and dusty.

I needed the job, so I stayed for 14 years.

Charles Cleaver, the working foreman, was white. He was a decent person. Like there's a way to handle any job, there's a way to handle paper. You can work the hard way and not accomplish much and hurt yourself. Cleaver took the time to explain things. If you were doing something that was working against you, he would tell you. He wasn't always on your back, either. Cleaver was a solid union person. In my opinion he did not see color. So my experience in the paper seasoning department with him was good.

On the other hand, I liked working out of doors in the bull gang, which handled freight cars and trucks. The bull gang paid an additional 20 cents an hour and you had the opportunity to work overtime. An additional 20 cents an hour doesn't sound like a lot of money, but it was a lot then. When you're just out of the service like I was and you're just getting started, you haven't got anything but a desire to work and get a couple of bucks. That's because you figure so much has been removed from your life you've got to run like hell just to stay where you are.

But when I asked to be sent to the bull gang I'd be told I was too important to be moved from the paper seasoning department. Someone else would then come in from the hall, would just happen to be white, and would work the bull gang and get the overtime pay. Also, as I acquired seniority in the plant, I tried to get into the higher paid trades as an apprentice. But I was never allowed into the trades.

You can see why long before the sit-ins and the walk-ins were popular in San Francisco I became interested in the welfare of all people, and certainly black people. A handful of neighborhood people and I were forever reading the numbers of the unemployed, and blacks always seemed to head the list.

Housing was very scarce in the city, too, with so many of us just back from the service. We were living in rooming houses with community baths and community kitchens. Many of us did not have jobs. So we decided we should get together, talk and do some demonstrating. We took that page from labor. We just started on our own to try to get jobs for people in the community.

Unfortunately we were not as sophisticated as the young people of the 1960s. We demonstrated in front of theaters, hotels and stores, but this was not a formal thing. There was no real organization behind us and the results were marginal. I think maybe this accounts for the vacuum that developed between 1947, '48 and the sit-ins of the late '50s or early '60s. Still, all of the battles we fought in the mid-1940s might not have produced much then, but I think they helped crack some of the doors that opened later.

Obviously I was interested when a Black Caucus developed in Local 6 in 1947. We decided to meet on an informal basis to discuss problems that affected blacks and other minorities in the local. The caucus discussed grievances we thought were not being handled properly. We often heard of people being bypassed for jobs.

There were also certain discharges we felt warranted greater attention from the officers. At least we felt this grievance was not being aired quickly enough. I'm not saying the union did not pursue discharges as such. But not all officers pursued them as they should have. So we wanted to band together



Curtis McClain



In 1969 McClain (center left) took office as the first African American elected President of Local 6. International Secretary-Treasurer Louis Goldblatt (center right) handed him the gavel as Local 6 Business Agent Bill Burke (far left) and Local 6 Secretary-Treasurer George Valter looked on.

ILWU ORAL HISTORY  
Volume 2

Curtis McClain  
union officer and  
activist,



# d civil rights activist, 1946-1982



so it was not just one person approaching the officers or going to a meeting to deal with a problem.

When I say we, I am referring to other black rank-and-file members of the union. There were no outsiders. All the people who attended these meetings were dues-paying members of Local 6. We started very small. There were five or six of us who met first and exchanged ideas. We expanded to 25 or 30 on the San Francisco side of the bay. We had a close working relationship with white rank-and-file members in the local, but there were no white brothers in the caucus.

We reached 25 rapidly. I think we could have expanded to a much larger number if we had chosen to. The union was changing. There was a large influx of black people coming into the union. World War II was over. The shipyards were closing

down. The warehouse industry offered a means of people obtaining employment.

Some of the new people had been stewards or had held leadership positions in other unions. They were not satisfied just coming to membership meetings and playing the role of voting rank and filers without giving input into policies and programs. So we could have expanded the caucus to most any number, but it remained small because we chose to keep it small. It was a group we thought we could work with.

When we formed we had in mind to get organized for political purposes within the union. The term Black Caucus was really a name white trade unionists called us. We were not too upset because they called us a Black Caucus—after all, it was a group of black people coming together to discuss problems.

But we constantly called ourselves the Frontiersmen. This was a club we set up so if we were questioned, there would never be any problem, because we sponsored dances and parties. We tied ourselves in with social activities within the community.

Clearly, though, the purpose of the Frontiersmen was to organize so we could elect an Afro-American to a full-time position and address the grievances taking place. I was the person elected as business agent in 1960. But there were appointments—field representatives, organizers—made prior to my being elected when some of the longshoremen joined with us to approach the International.

The first Afro-American organizer appointed was Roland Corley in the Redwood City division of Local 6. Also, the union began to have shop committees push more for promotions by seniority. This had been union policy all along, but in reality it had not necessarily worked out in the past.

At the time we formed the Frontiersmen Club, it was sorely needed within the local. We did a great deal of good, not only for the black union members, but for the union as a whole. We learned some of the fears and concerns of the union people, both black and white. After serving its purpose, there was no need to continue with the Frontiersmen as an organization. It dissolved after 14 years.

It was around the time the Frontiersmen ended that I became a business agent. I was elected in the fall of 1960 and took office in January 1961. After that I received the highest vote in the local each year I ran for reelection. Then, at the end of 1968, Chili Duarte, the president of our local, died in

office. I decided to put my hat in the ring as a candidate to fill the vacancy. The membership elected me president in March 1969 by a three to two majority.

When I became president of Local 6 our membership was approximately one-third black and one-third Spanish surname. Most of the rest were white or Caucasian. We were always a progressive local. We'd long been involved in demonstrations to get minorities hired, like those some years ago on "Cadillac Row," where the car agencies are located on Van Ness Avenue in San Francisco. Around 1963 the local supported the big sit-in at the city's Palace Hotel, too.

We picketed and helped blacks get hired in the better jobs where they could be seen and where there had been very few blacks, if any. In the hotels, for instance, before the era of the 1960s demonstrations you would find us in the kitchen, but not in the lobby as better paid bell boys and receptionists. Generally the local worked with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and ad hoc committees formed for specific projects.

In 1966 Mayor John Shelley appointed me to the San Francisco Human Rights Commission. The commission itself was a product of the sits-ins and demonstrations that were going on in the city. It was set up to ease tensions and bridge gaps. In 1969 I was the chairman of the commission.

As a member of the Human Rights Commission I was involved with the 1968-1969 strike at San Francisco State University by the Black Students Union and other groups. We were instructed by Mayor Joseph Alioto to set up teams and visit the campus to make certain that human rights were being observed. When some cop would suddenly hit a student over the head, you'd turn in a report.

A number of times I walked the picket lines with the students, talked to them and tried to find out if there were any grounds for getting the strike settled peacefully. Essentially the Human Rights Commission was supposed to act as a fire department and put out fires. But the commission could not solve deeper problems. It could only listen to people and attempt to mediate between groups. We couldn't order changes, we could just make suggestions. That was the extent of it.

In the 1960s our union also took a position on the disturbances in Berkeley, where policemen were indiscriminately shooting tear gas. One person was shot and died and many people were beaten and

arrested. Our membership instructed the local's officers to contact the mayor and the Berkeley City Council. We attempted to lend whatever services we could to bring about some peaceful resolution.

As a union we were involved in the legislative field as well. We had a joint legislative committee consisting of members from our Bay Area locals. It met monthly to map out our legislative strategy and to endorse candidates. We supported candidates we felt would initiate legislation that was going to benefit labor in the state of California or in the immediate area in which we lived.

Alternatively, we opposed legislation that provided for things like discriminatory practices in housing. In the late 1960s we successfully worked against AB-14 in California, a law that would have permitted an owner of a housing establishment to refuse to lease or rent to a tenant as he saw fit. So in the legislative field we have been effective.

We also backed the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) idea. FEPC was a law in San Francisco before it became a law in California. We urged candidates we supported for the city's Board of Supervisors to vote for a local FEPC, and they did. We also endorsed candidates for the state Assembly and the state Senate who favored a state FEPC law. Then we sent delegations to the state capitol in Sacramento to lobby for the California FEPC.

As to the future, I don't think the sit-ins and the lie-ins of the traditional civil rights movement will play a role in trying to advance the goals of the oppressed in this country any more. Violence and polarization seem likely because black people feel that we haven't made real progress. A handful of minority people are being placed on certain jobs and we've got more black faces in windows than we've ever had, but basically, the uneducated black and brown minority has not progressed.

One solution, I think, is that work should be made available for every man and woman in this country. You develop a certain feeling of independence when you have money that you have earned. At that point I think other things would flow into place because with a job a person has a feeling of pride.

I also think we're going to have to get out of Vietnam. We should have been out of there a long time ago. In fact, I don't think we belong there. I'd guess the war is going to continue to drag this country down unless we start thinking in terms of building peace and putting all that money into something useful like building our homes and cities.



Curtis McClain with his first son, Rene and his fire wife Olean.

STORY PROJECT  
XII, Part I

Clain: union  
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# Training builds rank-and-file communications team

Story and photos by John Showalter

The ILWU Longshore Division's Coast Public Relations committee hosted the first Coast communications seminar during the week of Jan. 23-27 in San Francisco. Sixty-one longshore workers from ports coastwide received training in primary communications skills. This first training was a result of the 2003 Caucus decision to build an extensive public relations program within the union. This training and follow-up sessions are meant to educate members about how to communicate with their fellow members, their communities and the media.

"This communications seminar was intended to prepare the membership for the media attention we expect during the 2008 contract negotiations by consolidating a PR network within the union," said Public Relations Committee Chair Dave Arian. "Since completing this training, these members are now able to get out into their communities, develop written or web-based materials and videos for their locals and form relationships with local media. It was the first step in seeing what talent we have and to explain to members how our communications structure works."

The participants were divided into groups of ten that went together through the series of three workshops—effective public speaking, writing for internal and external communications and using self-produced videos to tell stories. The seminar was designed to be a hands-on, skills-building training. At the end of the week each group made a presentation demonstrating the skills they learned, creating a response to a hypothetical public relations attack on the union by the employer.

Planning the seminar evolved at the same time a similar effort by the International Labor Communications Association (ILCA), an organization of labor editors, webmasters, public relations workers, etc., to train union members, officers and staff in communications skills for pending contracts, political campaigns and organizing efforts. ILWU Communications Director Steve Stallone, who was recently elected president of ILCA, invited a number of these professionals to teach ILWU members in these various skills.

Leo Canty, chair of the ILCA Education Committee, led workshops on public speaking. He focused on framing messages, building a vocabulary of terms to fit these frames and devising metaphors to express them. Canty then had members use their framed messages in written statements for hypothetical media campaigns and into visual concepts for videos.

"You need to know how the system works, so you can work the sys-

tem," Canty said. "I dwell a lot in my instruction on the power of words and the images they create in our minds. It is not hard to figure out how a specific message affects people once you break it down and present it in frames."

The writing workshops focused on how to clearly tell workers' stories for local newsletters and how to craft press releases, letters to the editors and opinion pieces to get media and public attention for the union's perspective.

"We have to get better at articulating our positions both among our own members and to other unionists, our communities and the general public, and we need more and more authentic ILWU voices doing that," Stallone said. "Approaching the written word was a little daunting for some members, but with a little practice and encouragement, they got the hang of it and had fun with it."

"Writing is the most crucial skill I think we learned at the training," Local 4's Troy Olson said. "Good writing is the basis for all other public relations, whether it is a press release, a TV script or a letter to the editor."

Many member-trainees felt that the video training provided by Howard Kling of the University of Minnesota's Labor Education Services and Amie Williams, an independent filmmaker who is shooting a documentary for the ILWU about the 2002 lockout, was the most empowering skill they learned.

"We assume video production is out of the average union member's reach, but it is not," said Local 23's Zeek Green. "We can take control of this same technology too."

Williams explained that people are often intimidated by video technology. To help overcome this fear, she focused on what she called a "guerilla crash course" in basic digital video production, including video, audio, lighting and non-linear editing. Trainees also learned important interview skills like avoiding asking questions with simple "yes" or "no" answers and being a good listener.

Williams encouraged trainees to use video for three key functions at their locals: 1) documenting day-to-day functions such as job actions, celebrations and historical events; 2) creating stock footage ("b-roll") and original, newsworthy video for local TV stations as part of developing relationships with producers; and 3) self-producing short films on topics like retirement benefits and safety, primarily for internal use.

"The ILWU has a very unique story to tell the public and it just needs to come from the heart, get captured on video and get out there," Williams said.

While compiling footage of the 2002 lockout, Williams found there were no videos of it made by any ILWU members. The seminar will hopefully change that.

Williams noted that she has never worked with such an enthusiastic group of participants. Trainees were so engaged, in fact, that they worked late into the night, to midnight and beyond, to produce short videos on topics ranging from a mock job action to a short history of ILWU founder Harry Bridges to intimate personal stories about who they are as longshore workers as part of their projects.

"For the first time out, the seminar was good," Local 13's Alex Bandy said. "We went straight into classes. The hands-on training is better for motivation. I'm now inspired to break out my camera."



Local 91's Brian ("Six Pack") McDonald makes a point.



Local 19's Danajo Montez speaks out.



Lesley Clark (Local 13), Sean O'Donnell (Local 52) and Gretchen Tostrup (Local 63) take the red cat for top overall honors for their group's presentation.



Local 63's Patricia Aguirre (at microphone) and other group members present a mock press conference on health threats posed to workers and community by polluted port air.



Local 8's Bruce Holte conducts a mock interview with two longshore workers.



Local 23's Zeek Green addresses the members.



# Saving lives by cutting pollution

By John Showalter

**F**ed up with air pollution at West Coast ports and its adverse effects on longshore workers and their communities, the ILWU launched a new initiative for healthier workplaces and neighborhoods. Called the "Saving Lives" campaign, the ILWU is calling for a 20 percent reduction in ship smokestack emissions by 2010.

ILWU International President James Spinosa, with Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa at his side, announced the call for tougher measures to clean up the air at ports Monday, Jan. 30 at a conference on goods movement and its health effects in Long Beach, Calif.

They made their remarks before a packed room of reporters, local, state and federal agency officials, business representatives and several members of the Southern California longshore locals attending the Faster Freight Cleaner Air 2006 Conference (FFCA). Also speaking at the press conference were Los Angeles Harbor Commissioner and Local 13 member Joseph Radisich and ILWU Coast Safety Committee Chair John Castanho from Local 10.

"The thousands of men and women I represent and work for raise their families under the cloud of port pollution," Spinosa said. "They have made a simple demand of their union. While they want to earn a good living, they do not want to pay with their lives for a stronger economy."

Radisich, who developed the "Saving Lives" strategy, laid out the particulars of the program.

Vessel emissions are recognized as the single largest source of air pollution in modern ports. Recent health studies by the State of California's South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) and others show that microscopic particulate matter emitted by oceangoing vessels' engines is carcinogenic and a significant contributor to respiratory disor-



L.A. Harbor Commissioner and Local 13 member Joe Radisich (at mic) presents the ILWU's "Saving Lives" program. Seated left to right are L.A. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, ILWU International President James Spinosa and Coast Safety Committee Chair John Castanho.

ders like asthma. Residents and longshore workers who live and work at or near the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach face some of the gravest threats coastwise from carcinogenic diesel emissions. In these areas, one in 200 people can expect to develop cancer because of the polluted air.

The Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach have begun moves to cut back on ship pollution, requiring new terminals to provide electric power for docked vessels, a process called cold ironing, and by requiring ships to go slower as they approach the ports. They have also moved to require cleaner fuels for cargo-handling equipment on the docks and reductions in diesel truck idling. But more needs to be done.

The SCAQMD, the California Air Resource Board and the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have all made noises about trying to regulate vessel emissions, but their legal jurisdiction over inter-

national ship-owning companies is questionable. The ILWU, with its coastwise contract and national and international ties with other dockworker unions, is in a unique position to push for the maritime industry to implement new, cleaner standards.

Spinosa said the union will work to promote the retrofitting of existing harbor craft with cleaner engines, the use of alternative, cleaner fuels and the development of new technologies to reduce pollution, especially for new ships. The ILWU will also work with state and federal officials for more effective anti-pollution policies and with its international allies to get the International Maritime Organization, the United Nations Agency concerned with safe shipping and cleaner oceans, to develop stronger international standards.

The mayor affirmed his commitment to continued economic prosperity at the nation's busiest pair of ports, but in a way that will not

further harm the health of port community residents.

"Today, we launch a historic partnership with the ILWU," Villaraigosa said. "As Los Angeles continues to grow its economy, we must address the negative environmental and health impacts of trade. Solving this problem will require bonds of partnership and a strong commitment to action from all parties."

Later that same week, on Feb. 3, Spinosa, Coast Committeeman Ray Ortiz, Jr., and Public Relations Committee Chair David Arian joined Los Angeles City Councilwoman Janice Hahn in supporting a unanimously-approved City Council resolution calling for federal ratification of an international standard for ship smokestack emissions. The agreement creates limits on emissions from vessel exhaust. It is scheduled to go into effect in nations that have ratified it on May 19, 2006, although the U.S. is still not among those nations.

## Grocery workers walk the line for pay equality

by Tom Price

**W**orkers in Regina, Saskatchewan are holding a line in the snow in the sixth month of a strike against the second largest and most anti-union grocery chain in Canada. The dispute, at one of a small number of unionized Sobeys stores, is being bitterly fought—the union needs the foothold this store represents and the company needs to break the strike at this one franchise to stave off union drives at other stores. The whole labor movement has a stake in this one because if the union is busted there, other employers will likely use it to lower wages everywhere as grocery stores in the U.S. experienced in the last couple of years.

The 100 members of the Retail, Wholesale Department Store Union (RWDSU) Local 454, an affiliate of ILWU Canada, walked out last Sept. 11 over pay equality, pensions, sick leave and the high cost of insurance co-pays. They had been without a contract for more than nine months before walking.

RWDSU battled hard for recognition at the Regina store in 1999 and employers signed the first contract in 2002. Since then, the franchise owners have attempted several decertification actions and have been found by the provincial government to have committed numerous unfair labor practices.

Picket Line Captain Susan Butson drives the union's bus out to the picket line at 7 a.m. each day. The "Strike Mobile," a converted school bus with the union's logo painted on

it, is equipped with heaters, food and an electric generator.

"This strike has really united the group," Butson said. "We have people from 15 to 60 years old on the line everyday. Everybody sees they can stand up to these employers."

And they know they are not alone. "We have gotten support from other unions," RWDSU Secretary-Treasurer Chris Banting said. "Community support has been very good, except for a small few who take a perverse pleasure in shopping in a store where the shelves aren't stocked, the produce is wilting and the meat and bakery are disasters."

RWDSU has walked the line with many other unions in the province and lent out their Strike Mobile many times for their actions. So other unions are contributing to the strike fund and the Sask. Federation of Labour, representing 93,500 workers in 35 unions, has called for a consumer boycott of Sobeys stores in Regina and Saskatoon Dec. 15.

"We don't take calling a boycott lightly, and it's a rare occasion when we have taken such a step," said Larry Hubich, president of the Sask. Federation of Labour. "But it's become clear to us that the employer's tactics and posture are rooted in a desire to strip workers of their right to a democratic voice in the workplace. In other words—it's an aggressive attempt at union busting."

The Dept. of Labour appointed a conciliator Sept. 23 to bring the sides together. Workers have twice rejected agreements by large majorities. In



From left to right: Teryl Burry, Scott Evans, Dustin Dyck, Clayton Miller, Shaundel Rich, and Trina Barlow.

each case, the vote on the "last and final" company offer was required by provincial labor codes.

Wages at Sobeys top out at \$14 an hour, \$12.13 in U.S. funds. RWDSU workers want to match Safeway, which pays \$19 an hour, Butson said. Even though Canadian workers have single-payer healthcare that covers hospital and doctors' bills, they still have to negotiate insurance benefits for prescription drugs, dental, eye care and specialists like chiropractors and massage therapists. Currently Sobeys pays about half the cost, which leaves the worker about \$750 per year to cover.

The parties returned to the table Jan. 24 with a government conciliator. Talks commenced with a positive light, Banting said.

"The company isn't doing well at

all. We put their business down by 80 to 90 percent and we thought they'd weakened," Banting said. "But their last offer was worse than the previous one. We could probably successfully charge them with bad faith bargaining."

Lowering labor standards seems to be the employer's goal, Butson said.

"Just like Wal-Mart, they like to hire young kids to keep the wages low and the turnover high," Butson said. The employers have told workers their jobs aren't "career jobs" even though many will work in the industry for 30 years and more, she added.

The months of long, 12-hour days on the picket line, especially tough now in the cold and snow, have not disheartened the strikers.

"We're determined to stick this out until we get an offer we can accept," Butson said.



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