



# The DISPATCHER

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## San Diego workers strike for justice at Harborside

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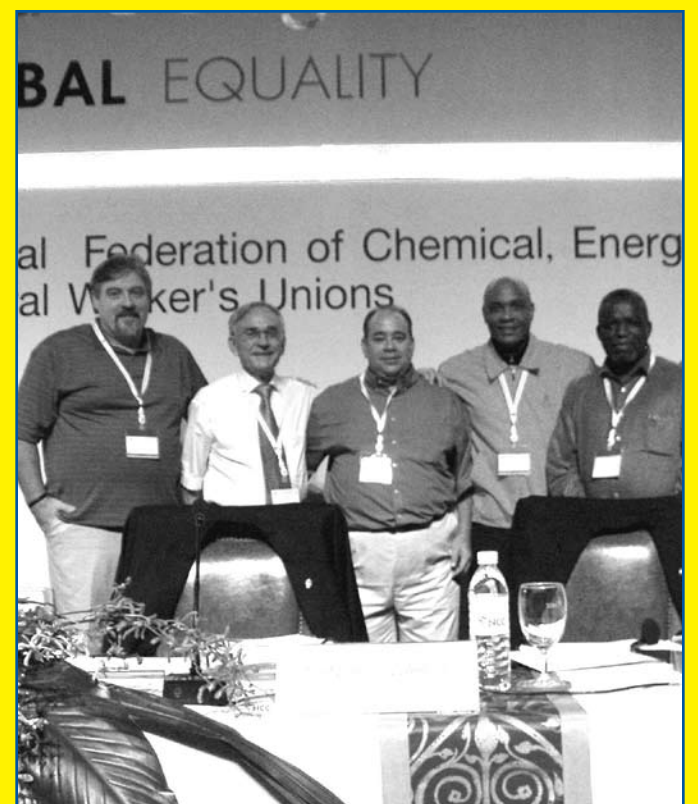


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# ILWU joins miners and other workers at meeting in Thailand

By Willie Adams, International Secretary-Treasurer

On November 22-24, I led an ILWU delegation to attend the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM) in Bangkok, Thailand.

Joining me were Mike Diller from Local 20 and Joe Norris from Local 30. These two ILWU locals represent workers that mine and process borax in southern California, but the entire ILWU is affiliated because of our union's commitment to the power of international solidarity.

The ILWU is one of 384 industrial trade unions from 118 countries that have joined forces to coordinate strategy, exchange support, and share information about how to deal with powerful global employers.

The theme of this year's meeting was "Global Unity—Global Equality," but we started with a smaller meeting of all the North American unions that sent delegates to the larger conference. We welcomed new unions that recently affiliated with the ICEM, discussed our different needs and expectations, and talked about the urgent importance of organizing. We elected representatives to a North American Executive Committee of the ICEM. The ILWU made a commitment to work more closely with other unions in our region, and agreed to participate in a network of unions that represent employees with two of the largest mining employers in the world: Rio Tinto and BHP. Rio Tinto owns the borax mine and processing center where ILWU members work, and recent news reports say that BHP is trying to buy Rio Tinto—creating one of the largest mining companies in the world.

One thousand representatives

were on hand when the ICEM was called to order on Nov. 22 at the Queen Sirikit Convention Center in Bangkok. The meeting opened with a colorful cultural performance by a troupe of traditional Thai dancers, but the subject quickly turned to politics when our hosts thanked us for meeting in Bangkok to support Thai labor unions and human rights groups who have suffered under the military coup that took power just a year ago. The cry of the Thai people will be heard.

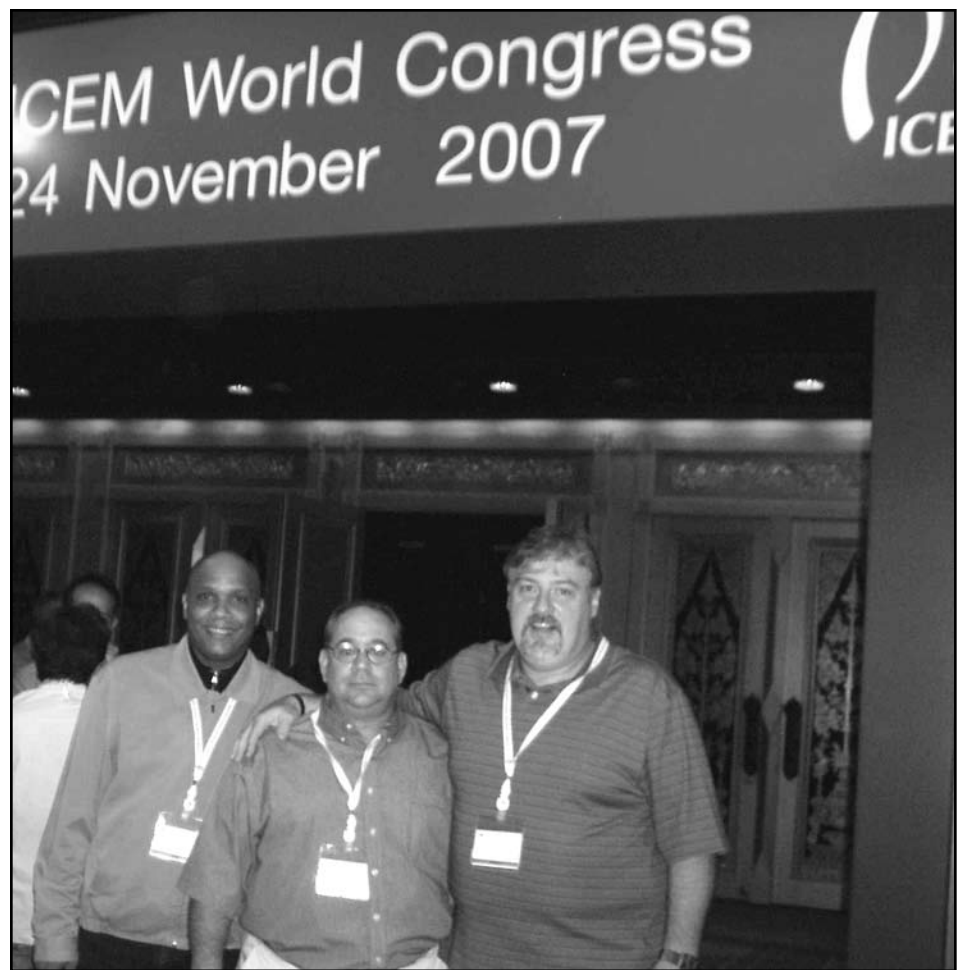
The impact of globalization on workers around the world was a major concern at the ICEM meeting. Delegates expressed hope that each of our unions will become more effective at the local level by sharing information and strategies with unions in different countries that face common problems or the same employer. For Mike Diller and Joe Norris, who represent workers in California employed by Rio Tinto, the conference provided a chance for them to meet with other union leaders from different countries who also represent Rio Tinto and BHP employees.

We heard powerful testimony about the failure of governments to prevent death and disease that are killing thousands of workers each year. This includes the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS in communities and workplaces around the world, and the need for all of us to address the underlying bigotry and fear that hamper public health and worker education programs.

Another shocking report came from our brothers and sisters in South Africa, who said that more than 250 South African miners had died in the mines in 2007. We heard equally frightening reports about mining deaths in the Ukraine and China.

Another problem we learned more about was domestic violence, an issue that was highlighted in a report from the women's section of the ICEM, which reported that 150 women are killed each year in Spain from domestic violence.

We also learned more about what is happening to workers and citizens in the nearby country of Burma, where a cruel military dictatorship is using slave labor for construction projects and killing opposition



Under the ICEM banner: Mike Diller, Local 20; Willie Adams International Secretary-Treasurer; and Joe Norris Local 30.

leaders—while doing a brisk business with U.S. oil companies.

The ICEM also discussed the terrible situation facing trade unions in Iraq, and agreed to support unions there which face many obstacles, including foreign occupation of their land and resources. The ICEM and the ITF (International Transport Workers' Federation) are both working with Iraqi trade unions from the country's large oil and gas industry. Iraq's new government is asserting state control over all union finances and freezing union bank accounts—making it impossible for unions to collect dues. The government is also ignoring health and safety standards despite many instances of occupational cancer that seems to be rising among oil and gas workers. The Iraqi government is also under pressure to give U.S. oil companies long-term control over the nation's oil resources. The Iraqi union representatives said they will keep pushing for democracy, a voice in their workplaces and their nation.

Administrative matters at the conference included the election of new officers to lead the organization: Senzeni Zokwana of South Africa was elected President of the ICEM, and Manfred Warda of Germany was elected General Secretary. A motion to move the ICEM headquarters from Belgium to Switzerland—to save money—was also approved by the delegates.

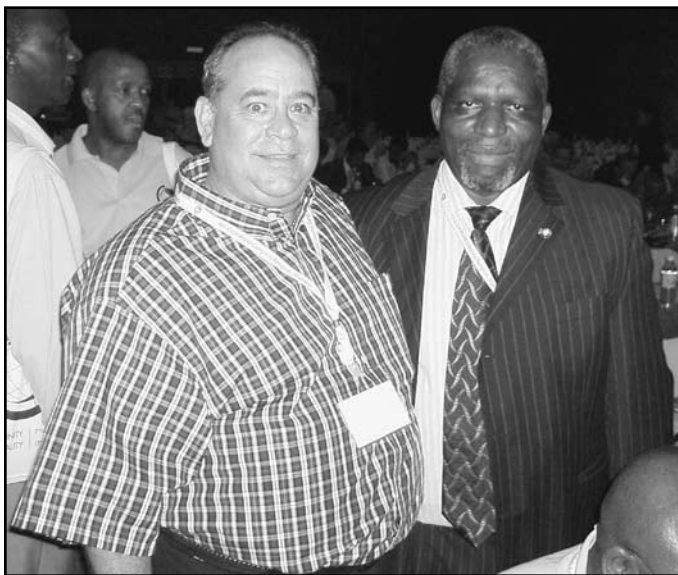
On our last night in Bangkok, the ILWU and Australia delegations met over dinner. There was good reason

to celebrate: Labor Party candidate Kevin Rudd had just been elected Prime Minister of Australia, defeating anti-union conservative John Howard. The unions in Australia had supported Rudd because he promised to support working families and repeal anti-union legislation that John Howard had been using to attack unions. Australian union leaders know there will still be problems in the years ahead, but they were thrilled at defeating John Howard's anti-union government. Listening to the Australians celebrate their election victory made me think how we might feel if George Bush and his followers can be defeated this coming November.

Our brothers from Australia wanted ILWU members to know—especially the miners and borax workers at Locals 20 and 30—that the Australian miners will always stand beside us in our future struggles. We agreed to do the same for them; pledging our mutual commitment to international solidarity—because workers are the same no matter where you go in the world.

We left knowing there will be difficult times and dark days ahead for workers in the mining industry, but also realizing those struggles are necessary and can be won, especially with workers around the world to help us through the tough times.

In the words of Thomas Jefferson, "I like a little rebellion now and then. It is like a storm in the atmosphere."



Mike Diller with ICEM President Senzeni Zokwana during a break in the action.

## News and Notes

### CALIFORNIA

**Local 6** reports a management change at C&H Sugar has meant a more positive relationship with the employer. The union looks forward to a better relationship, says Secretary-Treasurer Fred Pecker. The local is also negotiating a new contract for 25 X-ray techs at San Leandro Hospital... Selix, a tuxedo and uniform rental store in San Francisco, is being bought out of bankruptcy and the new owners are willing to bargain a successor contract with the local... Local 6 has joined with 15 other unions to protect the rights of immigrant workers against intimidation by immigration services. Many members of Local 6 are immigrant workers, including many women, who led a month-long strike support action last summer at Waste Management.

**Local 10** is closely involved in deciding what will happen to the old

Oakland Army Base, which the Defense Department has turned over to local authorities. The union opposes the development of a 17-story hotel that will be less than 1,000 yards from the working port. Other commercial developments would take more port land. The danger, according to IEB member Lawrence Thibeaux, is that developers will gentrify the area around the port and that could generate complaints about noise and unsightly industrial

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## Letters to The Dispatcher

Dear Editor,

Thank you so much for sending me a copy of the "Eye of the Storm" DVD. I'll be circulating it among my longshore brothers and sisters here on the Anchorage waterfront.

I have been receiving the Dispatcher for several years. I consider it one of the best union papers.

—Alex Newhall  
Anchorage, Alaska

Dear Editor,

The letter from Coast Committeemen Ray Ortiz Jr. in last month's *Dispatcher* was a good response to the narrow minded amongst us who want to kick the immigrant around. Since the days of ancient Greece and Rome, politicians steering a leaky ship have used the immigrant issue to divert working class anger from themselves and their State.

It is the responsibility of leadership  
*continued on page 8*

## The DISPATCHER

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Craig Merrilees  
Editor and Communications Director  
Tom Price  
Assistant Editor

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# Local 29 members strike for good jobs

The Terminal and Allied Industrial Workers Division of ILWU Local 29 struck Harborside Refrigerated Services at 6 a.m. Monday, Nov. 26. They were angry that they had no new contract after nearly a year and a half of bargaining. They were sick of company tricks that denied them benefits. And they were furious and sad at the death of their much-respected co-worker, Efren Montes, Sr.

Montes, 63, died Nov. 16 of complications following triple bypass surgery. Despite having seven years of full-time work with the company, Montes was on probation when he died. This left him with no health insurance. Harborside routinely puts people on short layoffs, then rehires them as probationary employees who can't get benefits.

"We walked out because one of our brothers passed," said striker Togamau Avau. "We looked at how that happened and knew it could happen to us too." The members have held the line 24/7 since they walked, with no breaks and no defections. They are determined to get a new contract that nails down full-time jobs with steady benefits, and brings wages up to match the cost of living. They have not seen a raise for five years.

The Harborside warehouse covers nearly 300,000 square feet at San Diego's 10th Avenue Marine Terminal,

making it the West Coast's largest cold storage facility. It relies on a core group of about 15 workers, but uses a total of around 75 over the course of a year. Owner Ed Plant also operates a non-union facility at the Port's other location in National City. Harborside handles a wide variety of refrigerated cargo, including about one-fourth of the bananas and pineapples Dole ships through San Diego.

"The AFL-CIO partnered with the Port to bring Dole here," San Diego-Imperial County Labor Council head Jerry Butkewicz told the Board of Harbor Commissioners Dec. 11. "In that deal, a lot of us made commitments: the Port, Dole, the AFL-CIO, and also employers who would benefit from this deal. But one of those employers did not live up to their commitment, and that was Harborside. We bragged about the jobs we were bringing in but this is not what we envisioned." Several strikers came to the Dec. 11 meeting with Butkewicz to alert the Port to Harborside's employment schemes.



Family of Efren Montes Sr. Left to right: Efren Montes, Jr.; Maria Montes, widow of Efren Sr.; and Noe Montes, son of Efren Sr.

"In 10 years at Harborside I was on probation 15 times," striker Rejan Washburn said. "Each time you go on probation you have to wait at least 60 days to be eligible for benefits."

Tony Hohney held up a fistful of pay stubs to make his point.

"They laid me off and said there was no longer work for a full-time position. They switched me to the on-call list and had me working 32-40 hours a week," Hohney said.

"This man [Ed Plant] says he's a family man and a businessman but he cut me off to where I don't have any benefits for my children and my wife," he said. "To me he's just a wolf in sheep's clothing."

Local 29 longshore workers are honoring the Harborside lines, and the pickets have slowed the flow of produce down to a trickle. Harborside tried to move product at night during the first two weeks of the strike, but that was stopped. Now it has only a handful of office workers driving forklifts and trying to ship frozen strawberries.

Close to 100 longshore workers joined the strikers Dec. 4, extending the picket line to a terminal staging area where Harborside was keeping product. Local members also joined a Dec. 19 rally organized by the Central Labor Council, which drew some 40 people from several different unions.

The whole union needs to take the events at Harborside very seriously, according to Coast Labor Relations

Committeeman Ray Ortiz, Jr.

"Having Local 29's Allied Division on strike a rock's throw away from a ship that our longshore members are working should be a reality check for us as we head into our negotiations [with the Pacific Maritime Assn.]," Ortiz said. "It tells us nothing is sacred, no one is safe."

Negotiations between Local 29 and Harborside resumed the day after the strike began. The two sides have met every week since then.

The strikers who have anchored the picket line are prepared to stay out till they can go back to work under a fair contract. They have set up camp at the picket site, with a propane heater and a tent strung with Christmas lights—and, often, David Krivasich's low-rider parked prominently out front.

"Everybody's bonding," striker Vanessa Krivasich said. "We're meeting people's families and sticking together. If anyone needs anything, we try to help, but it's tough being out of work."

The ILWU International and the Coast Committee contributed seed money for a hardship fund to help the strikers hang on. If you can add to it, please send checks to the ILWU International Office, 1188 Franklin St., 4th floor, San Francisco, CA 94109, attn: Karen Coffey. Make them out to "ILWU" and put "Harborside Fund" on the memo line at the bottom.

—Marcy Rein



Pickets Tony Hohney, George Sandoval, Efren Montes Jr., Don Correia, Bo Benilla, David Krivasich and Organizing Director Peter Olney.

## Efren Montes, Sr. Oct. 8, 1944–Nov. 16, 2007

When workers at Harborside Refrigerated Services struck Nov. 26, they plastered pictures of Efren Montes, Sr. on their picket signs and wore black armbands to honor his memory.



Efren Montes Sr.

Jason Reyes

"He was like our daddy at work," Vanessa Krivasich said. "He was the oldest guy there, a super nice guy and a proud worker. He always came in nice clothes, even though he knew he would get dirty."

Montes, 63, died Nov. 16 of complications following triple bypass surgery.

Born Oct. 8, 1944, Montes grew up in Sonora, Mexico. After moving to the U.S., he spent 19 years as a warehouseman in Teamsters Local 683. He and his son Efren Jr. started working on the waterfront together in 1999. Efren Sr. was an ID casual and put in seven years at Harborside as well, working through all kinds of injuries.

"He fell and hit his knee on the asphalt of the warehouse, and got a hernia on his elbow the side of a golf ball, but he kept working" Efren Jr. said. "He would tell me, 'I'm afraid if they see I'm hurt they'll lay me off.'"

Montes just kept pushing, his co-worker R.J. Washburn said. "He could work any young man under the table. He pulled his weight, and then some. If I had to leave to do something for my kids, he'd say, 'Go, that's important, I'll take care of things here,'" she said.

He was always joking and teasing too, she said. "He's say stuff like, 'Ooo, maybe mama will go on a date with me now because I'm bringing home some money,'" talking about Maria, his wife of 35 years.

Despite his seven years at Harborside, Montes

was on probation when he died, and so had no health insurance. Before being laid off last summer, Montes had been getting treatment for high blood pressure and was supposed to get an angioplasty. When he lost his insurance, he couldn't follow through with the procedure.

He went to the Logan Heights Family Health Center Oct. 3. Logan sent him to Mercy Hospital in an ambulance. Three days later he had bypass surgery. Over the next six weeks he was in and out of the hospital being treated for hemorrhage and infection. The lack of insurance plagued him the whole time.

"He was so worried about me and his kids," Maria said. "He said, 'I don't want to leave you with all these bills.' The first two nights he was home from the hospital he was so worried he didn't sleep."

Montes died in surgery Nov. 16, leaving Maria, his sons Efren Jr., and Noe, his daughters-in-law Nazaret and Nicole, and five grandchildren.

"The love he had for his grandchildren was very special," Maria said. "Every morning he woke his grandsons and took them to school before he went to work."

Asked if it would be OK to carry Montes' picture on the picket line, Maria said, "My husband would have supported the strike, because he knew other people had the same situation he did. He would tell them, 'This is the only way we can get anything done.'"

"I'm sure he would approve it 100 percent."

—MER



Local 46 members supporting the Salvation Army's Christmas Toy Drive. David Meza, on the bike, stands in for Santa.

## Locals spread community goodwill with holiday charity

By John Showalter

ILWU locals from Port Hueneme to Seattle were giving back to the communities where they live and work this holiday season like never before. Thousands of dollars in donations from local unions helped put a warm blanket around homeless shoulders, and provided toys to poor children.

The 175 members of **Local 46** contributed to the local Salvation Army's Angel Tree program by purchasing gifts and necessities for 150 children. As part of the Angel Tree program, the local had a Christmas

tree with paper ornaments. Each ornament listed a child's name and the toy they were hoping to receive for Christmas, and the toys and necessities they selected were distributed to families the week before Christmas.

**Local 13** and the Southern California ILWU locals are known for their holiday generosity in towns like San Pedro. This year hundreds of families lined up, reaching around the Wilmington hiring hall, which surprised many longshore workers with the number of needy families compared to past years.

News and Notes *cont'd from p. 2*

structures. Thibeaux and International Secretary-Treasurer Willie Adams will meet with the port and Mayor Dellums to express the union's concerns...The union is concerned about the privatization of data collected for port security ID cards. At first the union was told the data would be collected and turned over to federal agencies, but now the story has changed, Thibeaux said. Lockheed Martin, a huge defense contractor, will run the operation and collect the data.

**Local 14** in Eureka, Calif. faces increased gentrification of maritime land. The electoral defeat of Port Commissioner Charles Olliver, a 16-year veteran, by a well-funded opponent of maritime development, has raised concerns about the future of their working waterfront, according to President Damien Mooney. "We still have three out of five votes on the commission," he said. The industry wants to build a small container port in Eureka, but the new commissioner opposes it. The port needs to re-open a rail line that would connect the port to other hubs, but the new commissioner wants to turn the right-of-way into a hiking trail. He also wants to build marinas, condos, and restaurants that would move the waterfront

away from maritime, according to IEB member Thibeaux. The union wants to revive the railroad and get access to larger rail systems. This would serve as a relief valve for excess cargo from Oakland and create jobs in warehouse and longshore.

**Local 29's** Camron Pate became the local's first African American "B" registered longshorewoman last year. "That was a very emotional moment for me, I'd spent nearly nine years trying to get to that point," she said. "I was delighted." Pate had worked for United Airlines as a union flight attendant for 28 years while juggling two jobs and childcare—while also earning enough hours to obtain her 'B' registration. Now she's trained in driving heavy forklifts and other longshore jobs, including some clerical work and supervisory work. "I've talked to a lot of women casuals and I've told them not to get discouraged; it pays off if they stick with it."

### ALASKA

**Alaska** faces a slow period as fishing and tourism enter seasonal declines, says International Executive Board Member Pete Hendrickson. Cruise ships will return in the late spring, so Seward, Juneau, Whittier and Ketchikan will have little or no work until then. Fishery work declined when the pollock season ended on Nov. 1st, apparently due to ocean temperature changes that scattered the fish and moved them toward the Northeast. The catch was down and the season ended without meeting the quota—down 26 percent down from last year. Crab fishing has improved, and that means more container work.

Dutch Harbor and Kodiak will see container work throughout the long winter. At Dutch, an additional gantry crane has been added to work larger Maersk ships...Alaska Longshore still has a beef with foreign carriers who would like to load ships with non-ILWU workers. Members from Dutch Harbor went to Clark's Point, in Bristol Bay, to load salmon. They stood by while the Dept. of Labor people "dithered over our claim

"I've never seen so many destitute people. Before we just had a trickle of people, now we have them lined up around the building," longshore worker Paul Sanchez told a local reporter. "The economy is not good."

The children who flooded Local 13's hall on the morning of Monday, Dec. 17, were from low-income families — many were homeless, disabled, or had parents in prison. Local 13 volunteers helped children select their favorite doll, racecar, board game, or other toy from the thousands of gifts in the hall. Other volunteers provided visitors with servings from more than 20 cakes, 900 cookies, 100 cupcakes, and 12 gallons of punch. In total, the ILWU spent about \$20,000 on the community party and gifts for Southern California families.

Longshore **Local 14** in Eureka, Calif. donated \$500 to the Eureka Firefighters' Toy Drive, the same as last year. Employer SSA Pacific matched the union's donation, giving another \$500 to an area food bank.

In Portland, **Local 8** worked with ILWU Local 8 Federal Credit Union to raise donations from members. The donations were used to purchase a truck full of new toys and more than 100 new bicycles, which were then delivered to Portland Fire Station No. 1. The toys were distributed to needy families on Friday, Dec. 14, as part of a 75-year-old effort by Portland Fire and Rescue and Portland Firefighters Local 43 called "Toys 'N' Joy Makers." Also in the Portland area, Marine Clerks **Local 40** and Longshore **Local 4** Credit Union in Vancouver, Wash. bought gifts for about 30 needy children at the Minnehaha Grade School. In

to work under the Immigration and Nationality Act," Hendrickson said. "The ball is now in the Department of Labor's court. We're optimistic about a positive outcome, which would lead to more hours for Alaska longshore workers throughout the state."

**Local 200** health care workers in Juneau have begun negotiations on their next contract. Retired Local 200 President John Bukoskey will assist if necessary.

**ILWU Canada** scored a victory in its battle against invasive security screening when Transport Canada, the government ministry in control of issuing security ID cards, extended the deadline for registry from Dec. 15 until Feb. 20, 2008. ILWU Canada has raised serious privacy questions about their government's invasive snooping into workers' backgrounds.

ILWU Canada President Tom Dufresne thanked Transport Minister Lawrence Cannon for the extension.

When ILWU Canada refused to comply with the regulations as written, citing privacy rights, the employers' group, the British Columbia Maritime Employers Assn., claimed that the union was engaging in an illegal strike. This caused a panic among the shippers. The transport ministry's extension has delayed the conflict, but the union is holding to its position that the proposed screening scheme violates Canada's Privacy Act and its Constitution.

The union objects to the use of hearsay evidence that could deny a worker clearance to work and the questioning of spouses and ex-spouses. Anything sounding remotely suspicious to the authorities could be used to deny workers a security credential—effectively the same as a termination. As currently written, a worker screened off the docks could only appeal to the government agency that denied his or her credential. This means workers might have to go to a foreign country to get information necessary to defend themselves. "About 40% of our workers were born outside Canada, and it could take between three and nine months for the proper documents to be processed

*continued on page 8*



Kids enjoy presents and snacks at the Local 13

in addition, Local 40 ran a food drive for recent victims of flooding in nearby Vernonia, Oregon.

In Tacoma, **Local 23** Trustees' Charity Director Dragan Butorac said his local was able to help more people in their communities this year than before. The local's Family in Need Program—now in its third year—continues to help needy children in 109 grade schools in the Tacoma, Fife, Peninsula, Franklin, Puyallup, and Bethel school districts. The program works with school counselors and principals to identify one student in their school and provides each of their families with gift cards worth \$200 for basic needs.

Local 23's Annual Toy Drive began partnering with a local charity called "Brightening for Children," that provides more than 2,000 toys to needy local children. The union and charity distributed the toys—including more than 60 bicycles—through such organizations as Fife School District, Christian charity group Fish Food Network, St. Leo's Hospitality Kitchen (a long-time partner of the local), Recovery in Motion (which helps children of incarcerated parents), Chance Foster Children, the

## ITF helps container

By Stefan Mueller-Dombois, ITF Inspector

The primary job of the Southern California Inspector for the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) is to enforce ITF contracts covering seafarers — and help crews get a contract if they're on a ship without one. The ITF contracts we negotiate establish fair wages, decent conditions, and work rules for seafarers. Every ITF contract also includes a "Dockers Clause" that prohibits seafarers from doing longshore work.

Like all labor organizing, helping seafarers win an ITF contract is easier said than done because most ship owners take advantage of the "Flag of Convenience" (FOC) scheme in order to avoid labor laws, taxes, and environmental responsibilities that can be easily done by flying flags from Panama, Liberia, and other countries.

In early November 2007, I received an alert from our ITF office in New Zealand that the *Cap Delgado*, a non-union ship with a troubled history, was heading toward Long Beach. A few days later, I received a text message from a crewman who complained of low wages and poor treatment by his company and captain aboard the German-owned vessel, which sails under the Liberian flag and calls regularly at the Port of Long Beach. Now I had an inside crew for this troubled ship.

After more text-phone conversations with the crew, we agreed to meet when the ship arrived in Long Beach. At our first meeting, the crew gave us written authorization to take an action and speak on their behalf. They had read an article in the ITF publication, *Seafarers Bulletin*, about another crew that won an ITF contract in Long Beach by refusing to sail for 30 hours until management agreed to sign an ITF contract.

One *Cap Delgado* crewman said that they were tired of being treated "like animals" by their captain, and were willing



Local 29's Camron Pate.



3 hall.

Alliance for Children, Children's Home Society, and the Puget Sound Labor Council. Local 23 longshore workers Mandy Peterson, Holly Hulscher, and Kim Boespflug made a special effort by personally delivering toys to abused women and their children at the Tacoma's Women's Shelter.

The Tacoma local also gave an annual donation to St. Leo's Hospitality Kitchen. Typically, it gives \$6,000, but this year increased the donation to \$10,000. The Fuchs Foundation matched the union's donation up to the \$6,000 mark, as it does each year.

In Seattle, **Local 19** participated in a number of holiday charity drives. Longshore worker Jodi Itman and Local 52's Mary Fuller oversaw the local's first-time effort with a local charity called "Northwest Harvest." Fundraising for the project by **Locals 19, 52 and 98** collected \$2,825 that was used to purchase more than 780 lbs of groceries for two local food banks.

Local 19 longshore worker Revlon McKinnon coordinated "Christmas for Kids," an annual charity toy drive for area children in need.

Registered 'B'-man and Baptist minister James Barnett first noticed ads for the local charity, Bread of Life, in restaurants near the Port of Seattle where he ate lunch. In October, he suggested to the Local 19 Executive Board that members could participate in the organization's holiday drive to collect blankets and warm clothing for Seattle's homeless. With the E-Board's approval, Barnett appealed to members at the November Stop-Work meeting. By the week of December 17, they had collected more than 60 blankets, plus socks, coats, and pillows.

"Keeping people warm seems like the least we can do during this holiday season for the most unfortunate in our community," said Barnett, who hopes to expand the program in coming years.



ILWU and firefighters together. Pictured from left to right are Chris Mitchell, Eureka Firefighters Local 652; Damien Mooney, President of Local 14 and Jeff Broberg, Eureka Firefighters Local 652.

## Ship crew win contract in Long Beach

to risk their careers in order to be treated like humans. The crewmembers knew that when they stood up for their rights and demanded a contract, they expected to be threatened with blacklisting in their home countries.

Our plan was to prevent the ship from sailing after longshore workers finished their jobs. Armed with authorizations from the crew, I would call the Coast Guard and ask them to check the *Cap Delgado* for a "deficiency to sail." All ships have a "Minimum Safe Manning Document" that spells out the number of seafarers needed to operate the ship. If the majority of the crew refuse to sail, then the ship won't have the minimum staffing required, causing a "deficiency" that prohibits the vessel from sailing.

Sunday night around 11 p.m. we initiated our action. I called the Coast Guard's 24-hour duty investigations desk." The duty officer said they'd send out a team from the Port State Control Division before the ship sailed.

I met the Coast Guard team at the terminal and explained the problems with the ship. We boarded the *Cap Delgado* together around 2:45 a.m.

The Coast Guard officer told the captain they wanted to interview each crewman individually in a private room. I was able to keep the rest of the crew informed the entire time by sending them text messages.

At 5:00 a.m., when the ship was preparing to sail, the Coast Guard informed the captain that his ship had less than the 16 minimum crew members needed to safely operate the vessel, requiring the Coast Guard to detain his ship.

The captain called his superiors back in Germany, and went back and forth with the Coast Guard, trying to find some way to sail without signing an ITF contract. At one point, he sent orders over the loudspeaker, demanding all Filipinos to report to the mess room

for a meeting, hoping he could learn who was leading the job action. I told him that ordering only Filipinos to attend the meeting was a violation of U.S. discrimination laws, and that other government agencies would be called to monitor this process unless he stopped harassing the crew.

Around 6 a.m., the company called my cell phone. They tried to dictate terms for a settlement, but I politely reminded them that the ship was now held up and we had lots of time unless they were ready to respond to the crew's demands.

Our first demand was for all the crew to be able to meet alone with me in the break-room. When I arrived, they were glad to see it was me and not the captain. I reported all was going as planned; they were very relieved and happy.

The ship owners immediately delegated the hard work of settling the contract dispute to a ship management company in Cyprus. Their agent understood right away that we needed to negotiate an ITF Collective Bargaining Agreement with back pay owed to the crew, along with Letters of Indemnity to protect the crew from future retaliation.

By 8 a.m. the captain received authority to sign the settlement and indemnity letters. The captain counted out \$3,500 in back pay owed to the crew and handed it to the senior officer in my presence.

I had a final meeting with the crew, gave them their letters of indemnity, receipts for the cash, and a copy of their new wage rates. I returned the Authorizations to the crew as I had promised, and explained that an ITF Inspector would meet them in every port for a while to make sure they were being treated respectfully aboard the ship. The ship sailed around 10:30 a.m. December 3, 2007. The crew waved and smiled, bidding me a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.



Left to right, Hank Blandford and Jeff Ortega from Local 17, Jeff Carter, Local 17 President, Lt. Governor Garamendi, and Local 17 Dispatcher/BA Everett Burdan.

## ILWU Locals lend a hand to Honduran workers

Northern California longshore Locals 17 and 10 are joining with other unions and community groups to help impoverished workers and their families in a village called Batalla, located in the Central American country of Honduras. The families have been hit hard by recent heavy rains and flooding that destroyed many homes, roads, and farms.

Local 17 members who work at the Farmer's Rice Cooperative in West Sacramento made arrangements with their employer to donate an entire container load of rice that will help feed many hungry families. Nearly 70% of Hondurans live on \$3 a day or less.

"The donation from Farmer's Rice was fantastic, but we didn't have a container, so Local 10 stepped-up and located one we could use to ship the rice," said Everett Burdan, Dispatcher/Business Agent at Local 17.

"None of the companies would donate a container, but our local was able to buy one from M.O.L. for \$1000, which is what we did to get the job done," said Farless Dailey, Secretary-Treasurer of Local 10.

A member of the Teamsters Union hauled the empty container from Oakland to the Farmer's Rice Cooperative in West Sacramento where it was filled by ILWU members. The Farmer's Rice team received a special hand from California's Lieutenant Governor, John Garamendi, who came to the warehouse to help load the container. A large group of TV and radio reporters were on hand to cover the story and publicize the union-led effort.

"I'm proud to be helping this project with longshore union members and the Farmer's Rice Co-op," said the Lt. Governor. "Reaching out to help other workers is what solidarity is all about, and I want to support your project," he said.

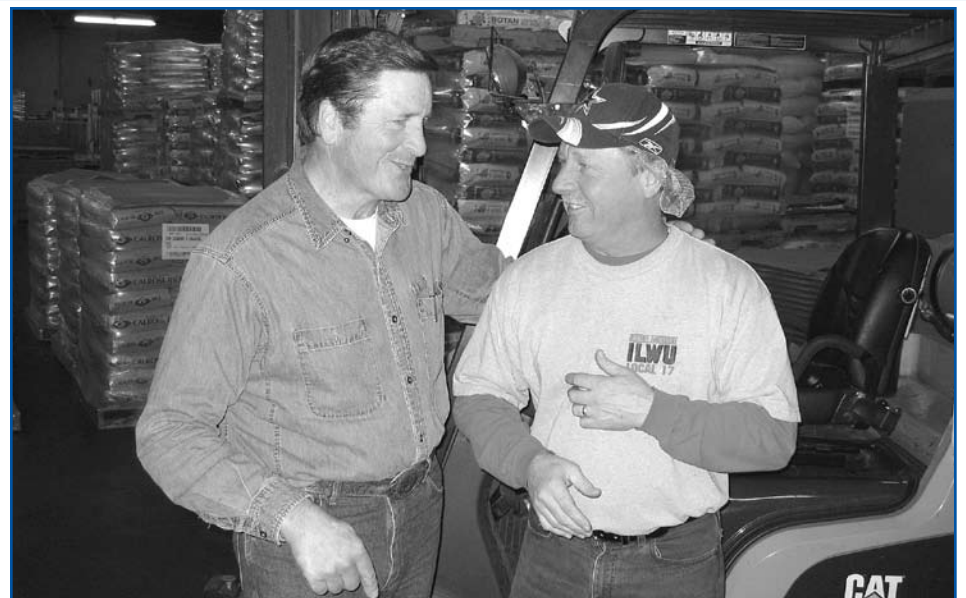
The next day, Garamendi flew to Honduras with Bill Camp, head of the Sacramento Labor Council, to visit the area where the rice shipment

will arrive, and to see where previous donations from U.S. unions and community groups have helped villagers build a new medical clinic that will serve thousands of workers, farmers, and their families. The new clinic was dedicated in early December at a ceremony attended by Bill Camp, John Garamendi and his wife Patti, and a host of villagers - many of whom walked miles to attend the event.

Honduras was once covered in tropical rain forests and rich stands of mahogany, but the valuable timber was cut down and carried off to Britain and the U.S. during the last two centuries. Honduran workers received little for their hard and dangerous logging work. Banana plantations were established in the early 1900's by the United Fruit Company (now Chiquita) and Standard Fruit Company (now Dole). The companies backed brutal regimes throughout Central America that killed trade unionists and kept most of the population living in deep poverty. Today, some banana workers are having more success organizing unions, but labor and peasant leaders continue to face threats and sometimes murder.

"It's great to help folks down in Honduras who really need a hand—and it's a good foundation for us to build connections that help immigrant workers feel more comfortable joining unions up here," says Bill Camp, who developed the Honduran support project while running Sacramento's Labor Council. "A lot of folks in Honduras have family members working up here in the states, and those connections can make a big difference in union organizing campaigns," he added.

Anyone wishing to make a tax-deductible donation to the help the workers and their families in Honduras can send checks to: CHIMES, P.O. Box 162126, Sacramento, CA 95816. You can also visit their website at [www.projectchimes.org](http://www.projectchimes.org).



California's Lieutenant Governor, John Garamendi congratulates Local 17's Henry (Hank) Blandford Jr. for a job well done.

## Executive Board meets in San Francisco

The ILWU International Executive Board met on December 6th and 7th at the union's International Headquarters in San Francisco.

Attending the meeting were: Richard Cavalli, Alan Coté, Michael Davenport, Tom Dufresne, Luisa Gratz, Pete Hendrickson, Ken Ige, Nate Lum, Avelino Martin, George O'Neil, Fred Pecker, Conrad Spell, Lawrence Thibeaux, Max Vekich, Jr., Jerry Ylonen, and Robert Zahl. ILWU International officers attending the meeting included President Bob McEllrath, Vice President Wesley Furtado, Vice President Joe Radisich, and Secretary-Treasurer Willie Adams. Also attending were Guy Fujimura, Secretary-Treasurer of Local 142, and Coast Committeemen Leal Sundet and Ray Ortiz, Jr.

International Union Trustees Alan Coté, Nate Lum, and George O'Neil met on December 5 with the International Officers to review the union's finances. Secretary-Treasurer Willie Adams reported that the union continues to build a small surplus, but will remain vigilant in managing the budget and expenditures.

Vice President Joe Radisich reported on the union's organizing campaigns. Security Officers at Local 28 continue to receive help from the ILWU Organizing Department to assist 24 guards at the APM (Maersk) terminal in Tacoma. A community picket line with over 120 activists recently made a strong showing of solidarity to support the security guards who are now negotiating with management.

The ILWU has helped win bargaining rights for workers at the Marine Spill Response Corporation (MSRC) in Tacoma and Southern California, and is helping other responders along the coast win their right to join the union. The Organizing Department has been educating local and state governmental leaders about shortcomings with the company's business model that depends on short-staffing, leaving communities without enough staff to quickly respond after an oil spill. The *Cosco Busan* spill on November 7 in San Francisco Bay demonstrated that it took MSRC nearly 24-hours to fully-staff their operation, and without enough staff to properly contain the spill during the first critical hours. State and local legislators are considering legislation to address the problems.

Blue Diamond workers got an important shot in the arm just before Thanksgiving when 200 community members came to support their effort to win union representation. A panel of experts including local clergy and

political officials heard dramatic testimony from workers, then issued a set of recommendations calling on Blue Diamond to agree to fair ground rules for an election. The panel is following-up with company officials.

Rite Aid workers at the Lancaster distribution center have gained important new union allies in their fight to have ILWU representation. SEIU 1199 and the UFCW have joined with the ILWU to make management show more respect for Rite Aid workers across the country. The group of unions confronted Rite Aid officials at the 53rd Annual Employee Benefits Conference in Anaheim, CA on November 3-7, attended by 5,000 people. Most of those attending were connected to union health plans, so they were very concerned about Rite Aid's anti-union activities in Lancaster and elsewhere around the country.

The organizing report also included an update on the strike by Harborside warehouse workers (see article in this issue).

The political report was presented by Board member and Coast Legislative Action Committee chair Max Vekich, Jr., who reported on the ILWU's effort to evaluate the top Presidential candidates. Republican candidates failed to meet the minimum requirements for consideration because of their opposition to most of

*continued on page 8*

## How Local 6 members won a fight for health and safety

by Tony Wilkinson, ILWU Local 6

Joe Silva, a member of ILWU Local 6, has been driving a lift at the Owens Brockway glass plant in Oakland for 37 years. For the last 10 years, he's been working in Warehouse No. 29, storing glass containers and loading trucks. During this time Joe has been dealing with glass dust—clouds of finely ground cullet (recycled glass) that sparkles almost magically in the light. The clouds of dust are caused by giant scoopers that empty cullet bunkers outside the entrance to the warehouse. The prevailing breeze brings that dust into the warehouse.

For many years, complaints about the dust were brought before a labor/management health and safety committee. Each time the problem was noted in the minutes of the committee, but no solution to the dust was ever implemented. In addition, there have been serious complaints from customers about dust on their shipments.

This year Joe started documenting the episodes of exposure and filing "letters of observation" with the safety committee. He wrote a personal letter to the company asking for the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) on cullet dust. He also requested a lung evaluation and an X-ray. When his letter went unanswered, he filed a grievance and the company complied in mid October, 2007.

Recently, Local 6 chief steward Ramon Hernandez and others started

gathering the letters of observation and put together complaints about the dust that went back to 1995. They requested and got technical help from the Labor Occupational Health Program at UC Berkeley.

While most of the 300 workers at the glass plant are represented by Glass Molders & Allied Workers International Union locals 141 and 142, there are 35 who belong to Warehouse Union Local 6, and 2007 was an ILWU contract year. Local 6 members decided to take the problem of glass dust and other safety issues to their contract negotiations.

At the first contract talks, held on October 30, 2007, the union presented a comprehensive set of health and safety demands—along with demands on wages, health and welfare, and pensions.

Local 6 requested training for moving and storing hazardous materials and the right to expedite the grievance procedure for emergency safety issues. They called for the changes to make the existing safety committee more effective. The committee was once described by one member as a "lightning rod"—effective only at absorbing energy, not solving problems. "You come to the meeting—drop off your complaint and get a free lunch ticket—and then come back the next month."

Local 6 asked for a system to improve coordination and communication with the members of Local 141, who operate the scoopers that create the dust clouds. And they asked for a daily sweeping of Warehouse 29, along with periodic air monitoring for dust, a barrier to close off the cullet bunkers from the entrance to the warehouse, and a lock-off switch on the rolling door so that it could be closed it when the scoopers were operating.

In addition to these safety demands, the committee presented powerful evidence: 12 years of company records documenting the dust complaints.

When the committee compiled all the times members had raised the issue of glass dust—year after year—as recorded in the safety committee minutes, it became something much more eloquent than a list of failures. Presented it at the bargaining table, it read more like an indictment.

The local 6 committee also presented management at the bargaining table with observation sheets completed by other Local 6 members who were impacted by the dust. They had photos of the dust patterns on the warehouse floor, and two cell phone videos—one of the scoopers raising a cloud of dust, and another of a worker

*continued on page 8*



Southern California ILWU members traveled to Lancaster by the busload and carload on Sunday, Dec. 9. Concerned residents and workers from Rite Aid's distribution center there joined them for a rally in front of a local Rite Aid store. Customers were warned about management's disrespect for consumers and workers across the country—especially those at the distribution center who want to join ILWU Local 26.

## IEB issues strong statement against symbols of hate

In late October, a few days before Halloween, a company truck was seen on the dock in Los Angeles with a hangman's noose and rubber vampire bat dangling from the vehicle's antennae. Over the next few weeks, other symbols appeared.

At this point, nobody knows exactly why the incidents happened or what was intended because investigations and hearings are pending, but the events have sparked a strong response from the ILWU, the Pacific Maritime Association, and union activists—all of whom want to make sure there is no room for hate within our ranks, or for symbols of hate and racism such as nooses and the legacy of racial lynchings they represent.

The ILWU International Executive Board met in San Francisco on Thursday, December 6 and Friday December 7. Board members discussed the incidents during their meeting, and issued the following Statement of Policy on Fighting Hate:

*The ILWU has a proud history of taking leadership against injustice, hatred, and discrimination. We were one of the first unions to oppose discrimination within our own ranks. The founders of our union, including Harry Bridges, worked tirelessly to promote unity and solidarity as powerful weap-*

*ons to protect workers against "divide and conquer" tactics practiced by bosses and politicians.*

*Discrimination takes many forms, including race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, or cultural practices. It may be expressed in writing, speech, symbols, attitudes, or practices. All these forms are based on ignorance, fear, and intolerance to the differences within the broader human family.*

*We recognize that injustice, bigotry, and ignorance are never entirely behind us, and that new efforts must be made by each generation to educate ourselves about past struggles and the new challenges that we must face to keep us moving forward and building unity.*

*The International Executive Board reaffirms our opposition to the use of any object or symbol to express hatred, bigotry, or discrimination of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, or cultural practices; violations will not be tolerated.*

Within the same hour, top officials of the ILWU and PMA met as the Joint Coast Labor Relations Committee to discuss the incident. The minutes of that meeting read as follows:

*The Committee agreed that display of actual hangmen's nooses or depictions thereof in the work site, dispatch hall, or the PMA office is prohibited conduct under the terms of the PCL&CA.*

*The CLRC reiterates its commitment to promoting a non-discriminatory work environment for all employees working under the jurisdiction of the PCL&CA.*

*Accordingly, without making a judgment on the merits of any Section 13.2 complaints currently pending, the CLRC directs all PMA member companies and all ILWU affiliates to maintain a zero tolerance policy with regard to the display of actual hangmen's nooses or depictions thereof. In addition, the CLRC directs the Joint Port LRCs to notify each member company operating in their areas and each ILWU affiliate that even a single display of a hangman's noose at a worksite, dispatch hall, or the PMA offices, in any form, is prohibited.*

*"This union was built on racial unity and solidarity so we could get beyond the divide-and-conquer mentality that held workers back for so long," says ILWU International President Bob McEllrath. "To keep us moving forward, we're sending a clear message against hate in all forms and urging everyone to focus on building unity."*



ILWU people join in thanking Governor Gregoire. Left to right: Max Vekich Jr., Local 24; Willie Adams, International Secretary-Treasurer; Governor Gregoire; Terry Mast, IBU Secretary-Treasurer, and Puget Sound District Council President Jeff Davis, Local 40.

## ILWU members show support for Governor Gregoire

by Peter Hart

Waterfront unions in Washington State turned out on Nov. 1 to support Governor Christine Gregoire at a fundraising event organized to thank her for standing-up for working families by supporting better education, improved health care, respect for union contracts, and stronger environmental protection.

Many rank-and-file members turned out from the Inlandboatmen's Union (IBU), and from ILWU Locals 4, 19, 23, 24, 51, 52, and 98. Terri Mast, National Secretary-Treasurer of the IBU, co-chaired and helped organize the event. Max Vekich from Local 52 and the International Executive Board, also helped, along with International Secretary-Treasurer Willie Adams who attended the event.

Gregoire won support from waterfront unions by opposing a container tax and supporting the Seattle Viaduct reconstruction that will improve freight mobility on Seattle's waterfront. She also stood up for the IBU

by moving the Washington State Ferry System into the Office of Financial Management, resulting in a better bargaining process and new contract for deckhands, terminal employees, and information department personnel who had endured six years of stalling by management.

Gregoire's main opponent in the next election is expected to be former State Senator Dino Rossi, who previously ran against her. Anti-union business interests are making his race a top priority.

Washington State campaign laws prevent Gregoire from fundraising a month before a legislative session until the end of the session. Her anti-union challenger, Mr. Rossi, can raise money throughout that period.

Maritime union members hope to hold more of these events in a continuing effort to elect leaders in the White House and state legislature who are more responsive to the needs of working families. For video clips of Governor Gregoire's speech go to [www.ibu.org](http://www.ibu.org).

## Two deaths at Port of Oakland prompt safety actions by union

By John Showalter

"Two deaths in two months is too many." That was the message San Francisco Bay Area ILWU locals sent to employers and the news media after another worker at the Port Oakland was killed on Dec. 3. In early September, Local 10 longshoreman Reginald Ross, 39, died while securing containers aboard a Hapag-Lloyd ship on Sept. 24.

Edward Hall, a shipping agent for Hanjin, was struck and crushed by a yard hustler that was hauling containers around 6:30 pm on Monday, Dec. 3, at the TTI Terminal, Berths 55-56. By most accounts, Hall was apparently checking cargo lists for a Yang Ming vessel that was docking when he was struck head-on by the hustler. Representatives from ILWU Locals 10, 34, and 91 were on the scene within an hour of Hall's death, joining California Occupational Safety and Health Administration officials and Oakland Police Department investigators.

Local union representatives—including President Tommy Clark of Local 10—immediately called attention to the two deaths in less than two months with officials from the Pacific Maritime Association. Clark expressed concern about PMA's continuous demands for greater speed in moving cargo as a probable factor in both tragedies. The same message was conveyed the next day when ILWU officials went to PMA's Oakland offices for a closed-door meeting while television, radio, and

newspaper reporters waited outside.

Marine Clerks Local 34 Vice President Frank Riley emerged from the meeting, was surrounded by reporters, and didn't mince any words: "We told management that this is totally unacceptable for workers to be dying on the docks. In September it was an ILWU brother, this time it was a shipping agent, but both are now dead and both of these tragedies were preventable. There is simply no excuse for people to die on the job in this day and age. Longshore work has always been dangerous, but that doesn't mean it has to be deadly," he told reporters.

PMA did not immediately offer any suggestions, nor did they give any indication that any safety revisions would be made.

For its part, the ILWU first requested a meeting of the Joint Port Accident Prevention Committee (JPAPC) for the following Monday, Dec. 10. At Monday's meeting, local officers raised numerous violations of the Pacific Coast Marine Safety Code (PCMSC) including the refueling of vehicles on the docks and walkways which are insufficiently painted.

The union presented five concrete actions for consideration by the employers that would prevent serious injuries and fatalities:

1) maintaining a "safe area" (e.g., no cargo movement) on the docks when tying and untying ships;

2) providing safe areas at the fore and aft of ships to allow cargo handling equipment a proper area to

*continued on page 8*

## Blue Diamond drive loses Mike Olivera

Mike Olivera showed up at the community forum for the Blue Diamond workers Nov. 18. Of course. Ever since he decided he'd been wrong to oppose the union, he'd been one of the steadiest members of the organizing committee.

"If Mike said he'd be there, I would know I could count on it," said Agustin Ramirez, the ILWU's lead organizer on the Blue Diamond campaign. "There aren't a lot of people like that."

Mike showed up that Sunday. Tuesday he died in heart surgery that was supposed to be routine. He was 61 years old. He had worked at Blue Diamond for 33 years. His younger brother and sister, Raulin and Maryl, and his daughter, Sarah, survive him.

Raulin remembers him as the big brother who backed him up. "When I was a little guy, he'd stick up for me if he thought an older kid was giving me a hard time," Raulin said. "He never got much past the 150-pound mark, though he was tall, but he was a real bulldog." Mike's friends at work remember that bulldog determination in the guy who decided to walk to work when his truck broke down five miles from the plant.

Born in Sacramento in 1946, Mike served two tours in Vietnam. When he got back to the States he went to Cal State Hayward, graduating with a BA in history. He started at Blue Diamond soon after.

A fall at work hurt his back, left his tall frame stooped and his walk a slow shuffle. But there was nothing slow about his mind or his tongue. He would flay a bad boss up one side and down the other.

"That's dumber than dirt, even dumber than what the cat buries in the dirt!" he once said about a comment by Blue Diamond CEO Doug Youngdahl. And Mike was critical of the Bush administration — making for some lively discussions with his conservative brother and sister-in-law.

"We had our differences, but we never took it personally," Raulin

said.

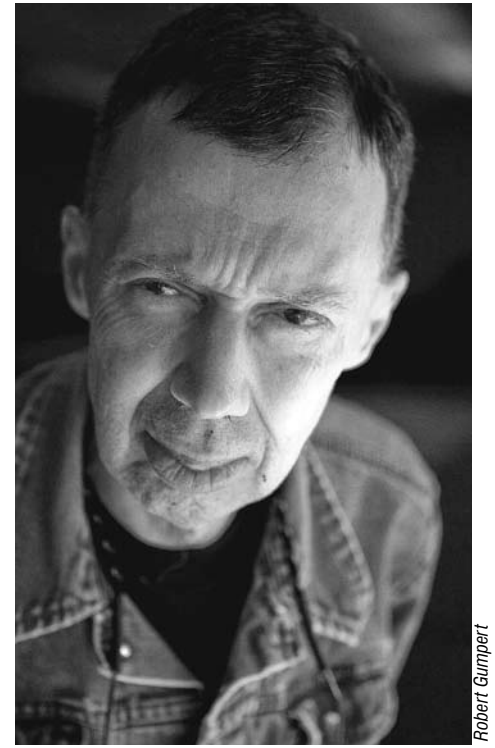
When the Blue Diamond workers tried to organize with the ILWU back in 1990, Mike was one of the strongest anti-union voices. This time around, he stood aside for a while.

"One day Mike came up to me in the lunch room and said, 'Gene, I got to apologize to you,'" Organizing Committee member Gene Esparza said. "I asked him 'what for?' and he said, 'I was against it last time, but I really woke up.' After that he always used to come visit in the break room, and he was always talking about the union."

Mike understood the need to carry out the organizing campaign on many fronts.

"Almond Growers tried to paint the campaign into a little area around 18th and C Streets, but it's bigger than that," he said. "I tell people it's going on the world stage, and wherever Blue Diamond is, the ILWU will be there too." And so will Mike.

—Marcy Rein



Mike Olivera

## Longshore retired, deceased and survivors

### RECENT RETIREES:

**Local 10**—Michael Gruner; **Local 13**—Frank Quintana, Alberto Medina, Albert Burnett, Gary Kelleher, Tommy R. Ramos, Rodger Trani, Raymond O. Smith, Ignacio Ibarra; **Local 25**—Glenn Treadwell; **Local 63**—Robert Vonnagel, Arthur Owen; **Local 75**—Leland Pitts; **Local 94**—Fred W. Torres, Ernest Lowe; **Local 98**—Mervin Johnston.

### DECEASED:

**Local 8**—Quinton Wright (Alice), Joseph O'Neil (Alice); **Local 10**—Chester Guess (Alberta), Louis Senna (Evelyn), David Stoneham; **Local 12**—William Armstrong; **Local 13**—Victor Ponce (Sylvia), Claiborne Turner (Carolyn); **Local 19**—Roy Murray (Monita), William Dow (Jean), Guilbert Pacheco (Theola), Thomas Lyons; **Local 24**—Edward Kaiyala

(Helen), John Reynolds (Muriel); **Local 34**—Pamela Romez (Latel), Rudolph Berry; **Local 46**—Rudy Soto (Maria), Robert Maria; **Local 52**—Roy McDermott (Sherry); **Local 53**—Robert Fogarty (Donna); **Local 54**—Loman Mortenson (Mabel); **Local 63**—Frederick Whitney Jr.; **Local 75**—Samuel Napier. (Survivors in parenthesis.)

### DECEASED SURVIVORS:

**Local 10**—Inez Workman; **Local 12**—Lydia Perkins; **Local 13**—Mollie Trujillo, Euphemia Barnes, Lorraine Leabo, Maxine Sullivan; **Local 21**—Margaret Thayer, Ann McQuaid; **Local 23**—Minnie Babnick, Margaret Curran; **Local 34**—Ethel Bruschini; **Local 63**—Thelma McLachlan; **Local 94**—Willa Mae Armstrong; **Local 98**—Mabel Webb.

## Party with the Local 10 Pensioners!

Join the Local 10 Pensioners Club on their party bus to visit the Thunder Valley Casino on Saturday, March 15. Tickets are \$25. Meet at 7 a.m. in San Francisco at 400 North Point, or at 8 a.m. in Oakland at the Eastmont Mall at 73rd and Bancroft. For more information call Bertha Miller at (510) 632-1830.

(if you want us to share information about your ILWU event, please contact us at least six weeks in advance)

**News and Notes** *cont'd from p. 4*

by those foreign governments," ILWU Canada President Tom Dufresne told *Lloyd's List*. Some workers come from countries with serious rights violations, and the information collected by Canada's security services could be shared with those governments.

**INLANDBOATMEN'S UNION**

Alan Coté, IBU President, reported to December's International Executive Board meeting that the IBU was in good condition financially. The seven regional directors met in Port Townsend, Washington for a retreat in October to sharpen skills and work on internal organization. Coté met with high-echelon Foss Maritime execs at a maritime award event and was able to solve problems around towboat negotiations, which have been going better since that meeting. Now IBU regional directors are in touch with higher level Foss management on a coastwise basis, bypassing lower levels of management that were unwilling to resolve problems. The IBU is helping workers at Marine Spill Response Corporation (MSRC) who want to join the union. MSRC workers clean up oil spills like the one in San Francisco Bay that spilled 58,000 gallons of bunker fuel when the *COSCO Busan* crashed into a Bay Bridge tower. The IBU said Marine Spill had inadequate staffing even before the Nov. 7 accident and many government officials seems to share that concern...Another spill response company, National Response

Corp., has an IBU contract for Seattle and Tacoma, but they're merging with another, non-union company and the IBU will be working to help those workers secure a union contract.

**WASHINGTON**

**Local 19** members, with members and casuals from Locals 52 and 98, have been attending many meetings of the Seattle City Council in an effort to prevent increased gentrification of Seattle's waterfront. After more than four years, their efforts paid off at a decisive council meeting on Dec. 17, when the council voted six to three to keep the port open for maritime use. "It was a huge victory," Local 19 President Herald Ugles said. "There was stiff opposition from land speculators and real estate interests." Retirees and former members provided important help, including retiree John Munson who sent letters and kept up the pressure. Ugles also credited former IBU President Dave Freiboth, who is now with the Labor Council. "The ports are a finite, natural resource, a national treasure. You can build condos and tee shirt shops anywhere, but there aren't that many natural berths," said Ugles.

**Local 98** walking bosses donated \$1,000 to toy drives held by their former locals. The bosses all come out of the Longshore Division and maintain their habit of charitable giving even after joining their new local.

**Local 6 wins health and safety** *cont'd from p. 6*

blowing dust off a customer's load of glass with an air hose.

During a three and a half week break in negotiations, Local 6 reps kept up the heat on the company. The reps were invited to inspect the work area in the batch department where raw materials for making glass are mixed, causing dust problems for workers in that area. The company could also see that the involved unions were interested in working together on this issue.

Local 6 member Francisco Valdez came forward with a complaint about the serious danger posed by a 32-foot long balcony with no railing to protect workers. The hazard was highlighted when a cart filled with empty propane tanks fell down 13 feet to the floor below. Luckily no one was injured in the accident, but it was clear this situation posed a serious danger.

Francisco had reported this problem to the safety committee earlier, but nothing was done. So he filled out an "Emergency Safety Alert" that was addressed to the plant manager. The Union met with the plant manager and suggested that until a railing was installed, the balcony was unsafe for wheeled carts and the factory elevator should be used instead. The company agreed to bring the propane tanks down by elevator, but was unwilling to have the large bins with trash roll over the newly waxed floors at the base of the elevator. Management said they would look into how to make the balcony safer.

Local 6 invited Glass Molders Local 141 President Mario Rivera, and Gary Smith, President of Glass Molders Local 2, to take a look at the unsafe conditions. This joint effort provided ILWU with valuable information, including more health and safety issues in other parts of the plant.

Local 6 workers talked with management and explained that the improvements requested by the union would also benefit the company and customers, in addition to helping workers. Local 6 also consulted with the Director of the Health and Safety Committee, who works full-time in a management position. He agreed that the balcony was not safe.

Local 6 resisted the suggestion that an OSHA complaint be filed.

As chief steward Ramon Hernandez says: "We decided not to turn our concerns over to an outside agency but to just keep up the pressure."

The pressure from the company to continue using the unsafe balcony was getting heavy. Local 6 was waiting for the company to keep their promise to "make it safe," while large tubs of trash were accumulating at the top of the balcony, making conditions even more unsafe.

The company sent several workers from the maintenance department to do Local 6 work and remove the tubs from the balcony. Committee members talked to them and showed them how unsafe the balcony was and they responded, "the company just wants to keep us divided—we aren't going to be used to compromise on safety."

The company stirred up fear in some Local 6 members by saying, "health and safety doesn't belong in negotiations we're going to lose our jobs," and, "The plant's going to close."

At one point, the company ordered a member of the maintenance crew to remove a tub from the balcony, despite the fact that the company's health and safety director was present and evaluating the hazard. The worker did as he was instructed and Local 6 filed a grievance for a jurisdiction violation.

Two days later, the company informed Local 6 that the maintenance department was going to install a new protective railing on the balcony the following day.

After that, it seemed like everyday the company was implementing another part of the union's safety demands: Air monitoring was done not only in the area of No. 29 Warehouse, but also the batch department. A barrier was installed blocking the bunkers from the entrance to the warehouse. Phones were acquired to enable the driver in the scooper to communicate with the lift operator in the warehouse. A new door was ordered for the warehouse. A training on hazardous materials was held. Even lights in the warehouse which had been out for months were replaced.

By the next negotiating session on November 29, 2007, Local 6 was able to take health and safety off the agenda to focus on other issues.

**Executive Board meets** *cont'd from p. 6*

the ILWU's top priorities, including:

- The Employee Free Choice Act, to protect the rights of workers to join unions.
- Health Care Reform, to provide the best quality health care for all Americans.
- Ending the war so the troops can return home safely from Iraq.
- Better port security that includes careful inspection of empty containers and seals, and assures that workers are treated fairly in the Transport Workers Identification Card (TWIC) process.

Presidential candidates responded by sending their senior staff for in-person meetings with the Coast Legislative Action Committee that includes International Secretary-Treasurer Willie Adams, Peter Peyton from Local 63, Dawn DesBrisay of Local 40, and Lawrence Thibeaux of Local 10. Legislative Director Lindsay McLaughlin and Legislative Assistant Kyle Weimann also participated.

Candidates Barak Obama and John Edwards submitted detailed written responses to an ILWU questionnaire; candidate Hillary Clinton's staff says they are still preparing a

response. Dennis Kucinich appeared in-person to meet with the Committee. Other candidates who have communicated with the ILWU include: Senator Chris Dodd who attended a town hall meeting in Sacramento with Blue Diamond Almond workers, and Senator Joe Biden who addressed the Longshore Caucus last spring.

The Executive Board felt that all candidates were addressing issues of concern of the ILWU, and that it did not make sense to endorse a candidate at this time. The Executive Board will revisit the Presidential election at their next meeting on March 28-29 at the ILWU International headquarters in San Francisco. The Trustees will meet on March 27.

The Executive Board discussed the recent controversies in Los Angeles and Long Beach involving symbols of racial hatred, including displays of hangmen's nooses. The Board responded with a vigorous statement opposing all forms and symbols of racial hatred, and calling on the union to uphold the ILWU's best traditions of racial justice and equality (see related article in this issue of the *Dispatcher*).

**Letters to The Dispatcher** *cont'd from p. 2*

to educate the membership in such tactics, but then the ILWU leadership continues to herd the membership into the Democratic and Republican parties to satisfy the bosses' wishes. You won't organize the unorganized begging for help from the fomenters of division.

Please accept the enclosed \$10 as my request to renew my subscription.

—Charles M. Minster  
Retired, San Francisco

Dear Editor,

I am a retired longshoreman who worked out of Local 8 in Portland for 35 years. Today I live in Vancouver, Washington. I just got my copy of the *Dispatcher* and wanted you to know how I feel about some issues being covered in our paper and our union that affect the entire nation.

I'm worried about illegal immigration. I don't mind anybody coming into our country legally, and all of us who came here were immigrants

at one point or another—even the Native Americans who came here 20,000 years ago from Asia. But we need to have limits and laws when it comes to immigration today, because employers are always looking for the lowest-wage labor and immigrants are the number one choice for them.

I also don't like the fact that we don't have a real border. I don't understand how we can enforce our laws without a fence to keep people out who won't wait in line, like everyone else who wants to come here.

Finally, we better hold onto the health benefits we've got because all the other union members seem to be paying co-pays to get their health care, and lots of people have no health care at all. The companies tried to take away our benefits back in 1971, so we went on strike to keep those health benefits and wages. Let's stay strong on this one.

—Earl "Tiger" Landsborough  
Vancouver, Wash.

**The Duck Walk**

Local 6 members at Owens have a break room with a bathroom attached. The plant is 70 years old and looks it. Last April workers got frustrated with complaints about the condition of the bathroom being ignored. When the cold water (no hot water was available) pressure in the sink finally went from a dribble to a drop, Local 6 members decided it was time for a DUCK WALK.

Tony Wilkinson explains what happened: "At break time we gathered ourselves and the Local 141 workers in the resort department and took off – like ducks in single file for the executive washroom. 'What do ducks want? Water! When do they want it? Now!' Winding our way through the plant to the executive washroom, we explained our problem to everyone we met along the way, and thanked them for the use of their facilities. Twenty minutes later a plumber appeared and the water in the sink was restored. It took a follow up petition, signed by an even bigger crew, to get the hot water back, but it was finally fixed.

"This spontaneous action pointed out something important to us all. Sometimes working outside of the box can get to the point and get action – and that we shouldn't let the barriers between workers keep us from working together on common goals. That experience helped prepare us for our success in making progress on health and safety in our negotiations."

**Port of Oakland deaths** *cont'd from p. 7*

turn around;

3) requiring all personnel (including truck drivers, vendors and management) entering a terminal to wear a hard hat, work boots and safety vest;

4) sending a Coast Referral to the Coast Committee, requesting an immediate meeting of the Coast Safety Committee to review the two recent deaths at the Port of Oakland and recommend changes to the PCMSC

based on their findings;

5) having the JPAPC establish a joint labor/management subcommittee to evaluate performance and compliance with safety rules on each terminal and report their findings to the PCMSC.

Of the five proposed motions, the PMA only agreed to approve number four, the Coast Referral. Employers said they would take the other proposals under advisement.