INSIDE

President’s Report: Safety is Job #1 .......................................................... page 2
Local 9 warehouse workers lose health care in court ............................ page 3
Canadian Labor Congress convention pledges solidarity and a good fight ........................ page 9
Bloody Thursday commemorations along the Coast ............................... page 10
Accident claims life of a Tacoma casual .................................................. page 11
DEAR GOVERNOR

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger,

Just wanted to drop you a quick note to say how impressed I am with your November special election idea. I’m sure no one will really care about the extra $80 million it will cost, even in a time of budget deficits. If you pass your initiative, you can just slash that out of all the other entitlement programs for the poor. And those people never turn out for special off-year elections anyway, so you got it made. And then you pile on all those other nasty initiatives—boy, you’re good.

Don’t let the fact that you’re behind in the polls on nearly every one of them. You’re ahead on your most important one, Prop 79—which would give public employee unions out of the state’s political process. Hasta la vista, baby.

And who cares about those whiny teachers? What do they contribute to erasing our trade deficits? What makes them so special that they should be the ones with job security? It will be a while before we know exactly what went wrong. But its meaning for the future of safety on West Coast docks is obvious.

This is the fourth ILWU longshore worker to be killed on the job in the last nine months. In an 18-month time span during 2001-2002 we lost six of our brothers to fatal industrial accidents, by far the worse period in West Coast safety in recent history. On top of this, there are the hundreds of disabling injuries that occur each year on our docks.

Almost everyone working on the docks any length of time has a story of an accident or close call or of seeing one happen. Every day we strap on our work boots and hard hats we should pause and think about the ones who are no longer with us and the ones waiting at home for us to return.

We should also stop and think about why these accidents are happening so frequently and what we can do about it. There are a few factors working against us, and we need to recognize them and work to minimize their effects.

The first and most obvious one is the working environment on today’s modern docks. Take a look around you and what you see is an impressive collection of giant, fast-moving machinery—cranes, straddle carriers, top handlers, side handlers and yard hustlers, each weighing many tons and all racing to get the job done. With those massive objects running at that speed, a simple slip of the mind can be catastrophic. It’s like trying to work on a freeway. Add to that the outside truck traffic congesting the area, restricted spaces to work in and the employer’s constant pressure for productivity, and you have a disaster waiting to happen.

The only way to really learn your role in this complex process is through experience and training. One of the challenges we are facing these days is the influx of new workers. With the early retirement incentives built into our last longshore contract, many experienced longshore workers have left us. The huge increase in intermodal traffic has made it necessary to hire more workers. Our longshore workforce has increased by 3,000 in the last two years—up from 10,500 to 13,500. This has opened the door for a new generation to share in the opportunity and prosperity of the longshore life. At the same time, they need to learn not just the proper way to operate their equipment, but how to do it to save life and limb—not only their own, but that of their brothers and sisters on the docks.

Let us be clear here: the problem is not with our new members. Our history has shown that with the proper training, ILWU longshore workers are as efficient and productive as any in the world. Much of the problem lies with our employer’s approach to training and safety.

General Safety Training is offered to all ILWU workers, but only once every three years. And that is only a one-hour session taught in a classroom by an employer instructor who has no practical longshore experience. In other industries workers undergo safety training annually, and in some cases, even monthly. Our work is just as dangerous and hazardous as any, and we need and deserve more frequent safety training that is more detailed and focused on the different job classifications we work.

One thing we have learned over the years is that we cannot depend on state or federal Occupational Safety and Health Agencies (OSHA) to monitor and enforce safety. This is especially true under the Bush administration, which has loosened standards and cut back on inspection and enforcement. The employer’s lack of concern for our safety was never more obvious than in the 2002 negotiations. Our practice for decades has been to negotiate our longshore safety code separately but side-by-side with the rest of our longshore contract.

In the 2002 bargaining, the employer’s representatives on their negotiating committee just said “No” to almost every proposal we put on the table. They refused our proposal to install speedometers on yard equipment so operators would know when they were exceeding safe speed limits. The employers were clear—your safety is not worth our investment, especially when it may affect productivity. We negotiate our longshore safety regulations as fiercely as we negotiate the rest of our contract. That’s because the wages, benefits and pensions we win don’t mean a thing if you aren’t around to enjoy them. So guard your safety code as much as you would your health care and, hopefully, you won’t have to use your health care as much.

Read your safety code booklet and know your best practices and your rights.

Yours truly,
Steve Stallone
Dispatcher Editor

Inside Line

President’s Report

Safety is job number one

By James Spinosa
ILWU International President

Tragedy struck the ILWU family again Aug. 19. That day, at the Port of Tacoma’s Everett Green terminal, Local 23 casual Kim Miles lost her life in a horrible accident. The cause of the incident is still under investigation and it will be a while before we know exactly what went wrong. But its meaning for the future of safety on West Coast docks is obvious.

This is the fourth ILWU longshore worker to be killed on the job in the last nine months. In an 18-month time span during 2001-2002 we lost six of our brothers to fatal industrial accidents, by far the worse period in West Coast safety in recent history. On top of this, there are the hundreds of disabling injuries that occur each year on our docks.

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Yours truly,
Steve Stallone
Dispatcher Editor

CORRECTION

In the June 2005 issue the president of foremen’s Local 94 was mistakenly listed as Stuart Anderson. The actual president of Local 94 was Danny Miranda. The Dispatcher regrets the error.

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ILWU Titled Officers
Northwest Airlines strike—Corporate America’s wave of the future?

by Tom Price

Airframe mechanics walk the picket line at Detroit Metro Airport.

AMFA mechanics walk the picket line at Detroit Metro Airport.

Warehouse workers lose health care in court

by Tom Price

Warehouse Local 9 members suffered a setback in their efforts to secure health care benefits for warehouse workers and retirees at the Port of Seattle when Superior Court Judge Mary Roberts dissolved a tentative agreement.

The suit, filed two years earlier and heard 10 months ago as a class action, hinges on the fate of former workers and retirees at the port’s Hasbro Toy warehouse. Local 9 held 97 jobs lost 77 jobs immediately. Eventually, Local 9 would lose 150 jobs, nearly half its NWA members since 2001. The company invoked—then we went walkied the picket lines.

The Professional Airways Systems Association (AMFA) has already lost more than half its NWA members since 2001. Those remaining voted overwhelmingly in August to authorize a strike.

Northwest Airlines is attempting to contract out maintenance to foreign countries on a massive scale,” PASS said.

Warehouse Local 9 President John Sweeney, representing the ILWU.

Northwest Airlines is attempting to consolidate its operations. Layoffs at the port letter Aug. 20 to AMFA express sympathy with the AMFA workers, but the vote fell short. Since then, the PFAA says the company filed a frivolous lawsuit and sent harassing messages during the vote, all to encourage a “no” vote. The attendants may get another chance for a strike vote after their negotiations begin Aug. 30. NWA wants to carve $143 million out of its 10,000 attendants with a 20 percent pay cut and huge job losses.

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THE AFL-CIO PROGRAM

The AFL-CIO leadership presented the convention with an extensive and ambitious program to expand organizing and political action, seeing both as interdependent activities for building the labor movement. For the last five years the federation has been growing its membership to devote 30 percent of their resources to organizing. (This was its pledge to its 2000 convention.) And while several million workers have been organized over the years, the loss of union jobs due to downsizing, outsourcing and bankruptcies has resulted in fewer union members overall.

So the AFL-CIO Executive Committee proposed, and the convention debated, a two-pronged strategy. The federation will help its member unions increase their capacity to organize and to attract full-time professional organizers. At the same time, the federation will develop public policy to restore the right to organize and bargain collectively that has been whittled down over the years since the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act in 1947 and accelerated under George W. Bush.

The federation will create a $22.5 million Strategic Organizing Fund. Two-thirds, or $15 million, will be returned as rebates to unions that meet organizing standards. The other $7.5 million will be used for strategic organizing campaigns important to the entire labor movement, providing expertise and technical support to campaign research and organizer training.

On the political front, the federation will launch an ambitious get-out-the-vote effort to build year-round capacity for influencing elections through organizing and legislative and political policy issues.

The program will focus on uprating and expanding the federation’s current efforts to turn back right-to-work-for-less and paycheck deception laws, and fighting against anti-union benefit pensions and health care programs. New efforts will be made to recruit, train and elect union members to public office.

The federation will also step up its focus on diversity. The AFL-CIO has set a goal of more racial and gender diversity on its Executive Council. The federation will create a $22.5 million Strategic Organizing Fund. Two-thirds, or $15 million, will be returned as rebates to unions that meet organizing standards. The other $7.5 million will be used for strategic organizing campaigns important to the entire labor movement, providing expertise and technical support to campaign research and organizer training.

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The organizing must go on

The AFL-CIO’s convention kicked off with a discussion of the war and occupation. The AFL-CIO delegates let their departments and other affiliated labor councils know that they were opposed to the war and occupation. The delegates also called for the Bush administration to end the war and occupation.

In July-August 2005, In ILWU tradition, the union’s delegation at the AFL-CIO convention shook up the leadership’s plans when International Vice President Bob McEllrath made the pitch for the ILWU—and other smaller unions—to have a voice on the federation’s Executive Council.

The ILWU delegation—long wanting a voice at the big table—had a different idea. McEllrath hit the mic first. He offered an amendment to the amendment that would turn it upside down. McEllrath proposed that rather than reduce the council from 51 to 43, the council should be expanded to 55, giving each union remaining in the federation a seat on it. This amendment cuts one,” McEllrath said. “This is the House of Labor of the AFL-CIO and everybody on this floor has a right to get up and speak and I say every union in this hall has a right to have their president sit on that council. I’ve heard statements that said, ‘Well you’re small. I know my union doesn’t have a million, but I will tell you this: you gotta start with one to get to the big leagues and an injury to one is an injury to all.’ An injury to one is an injury to all. It’s no different for the ILWU and its war on Iraq. When the matter hit the floor later that day, the Resolution Committee presented the stronger wording as a friendly amendment. Even the staff supported it and it passed by a voice vote unquestionably.

The ILWU’s drive at Blue Diamond Growers, using the power unions have through media outreach and legal tools, and the ILWU’s drive at Blue Diamond Growers, using the power unions have through community, labor and political support, fortify labor law.

AFL-CIO Executive Council responded with a dues increase to help alleviate the central bodies’ financial losses. But that did not satisfy the central bodies’ money needs or ease their other concerns. The Executive Council had to respond to their concerns. The central bodies submit reports to the council on the impacts of the disaffiliations that took place in the 80s, and they then propose new ways to deal with the central bodies.

But before August the pressure from below had the AFL-CIO proposing an inventive way to get around its own Constitution and allow the ILWU local unions to participate in central bodies. The AFL-CIO would grant "Solidarity Charters" to the locals, giving them special membership. But the proposal was drafted in a way that the CW leadership was able to find things in the fine print to object to. They demanded the locals continue to participate in the CLCs and state federations on the same terms they had in the past.

In August the pressure from local leaders was met with some resistance from their local officers and rank and filers to the splits and acrimony that the outcome of the vote would produce. The ILWU leadership has had its fill of splits and acrimony, and the dust has yet to settle. Much will depend on what happens at next month’s federation’s founding convention scheduled for late September in St. Louis.
Umo Qasr and Zubair, Iraq (6/29/05)—Early in the morning of March 2, 2005, 600 longshoremen, oil workers and other labor activists took the long road through the desert to Zubair, one of Iraq’s two deepwater ports on the Shatt al Arab. Some came south from Basra, the cosmopolitan capital of southern Iraq. Others came north from the country’s other deepwater port, Um Qasr.

At the gate into Zubair port they set up their line. Trucks began arriving, bringing cargo to the ships at the dock. Workers stopped them. Meanwhile, inside the port, longshore union leader Fadl Khalil Abood had a message for the Maersk Shipping Company. Maersk had been operating the terminals since the beginning of the occupation in April 2003.

“We told them they had to leave, and that we wouldn’t allow any traffic into or out of the port until they agreed,” Khalil said.

It took three days for the company to get the point. In the end, however, the Iraqi Port Authority was reinstated as the public agency operating one of the government’s most important public assets. The port’s historic longshore workforce, most excluded from their jobs since Maersk took over, went back to work.

In the dockside control room, engineers Yusef Abdul Samat, Murat Nasser and Luay Abdul Hussein looked over the electrical panels which monitor and control port operations. Gaping holes had been left when Maersk personnel pried switches loose and took them away.

“This is a serious problem for us since we have no money to buy replacements,” explained Murat. “Still, we’ll figure something out. The main thing is we got control of the port back.”

When Maersk, a Danish company, came in to operate the Zubair docks, the three engineers had been told to leave the property. They were only able to return to their jobs once the company was gone.

The invading American troops gave Maersk control of Zubair, a political plum to reward President Bush for his heavy political contributions to the Bush administration. SSA, which made most of the important decisions during the occupation, however, only contributed $24,825 in the 2003-2004 election cycle, starting with SSA. The company, which has a $1 billion-a-year, family-owned business with more than 10,000 employees worldwide. Between 1990 and 2002, its government contracts were worth $1 billion. The shipping industry as a whole has been a heavy political contributor, giving 68 percent of its $4.3 million in campaign contributions to Republicans, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.

Privatizing Um Qasr began an effort to transform Iraq’s economy—from one based on nationalization and production for domestic welfare, to one based on ownership by transnational corporations, sending their profits out of the country. The port was built following the revolution of 1958, when Saddam Hussein’s dictatorship. Law 150 banned unions in the public sector for workers like longshoremen. At the same time, a decade-long war with Iran, then the first Gulf War, followed by 12 years of sanctions and, finally, a new invasion and occupation, all took their toll. Um Qasr and Zubair lay in a shambles, although the basic infrastructure was still in place.

Enter SSA.

That’s when private companies entered the picture, starting with SSA. The company, which has a history of tight political connections with the Bush administration, received a $4.8 million, no-bid contract to operate the port of Um Qasr on March 24, 2003. According to the USAID website, the contract reached as high as $14.3 million by its completion. It covered the assessment of the port’s needs, assistance in making it operational, but then also the ongoing management of dockside operations.

The process by which SSA became an Iraqi port operator says a lot about the company’s relationship with the Bush administration. SSA Marine is a $1 billion-a-year, family-owned business with more than 10,000 employees worldwide. Between 1990 and 2002, its government contracts were worth $86,117,000.

The shipping industry as a whole has been a heavy political contributor, giving 68 percent of its $4.3 million in campaign contributions to Republicans, according to the Center for Responsive Politics. SSA, however, only contributed $24,825 (7 percent of total contributions to Republicans) in the 1999 and 2002, and Bush received a mere $1,000.

But these relatively small expenditures don’t give an accurate picture of the real relations between SSA and the White House. Those were revealed in 2002, during the negotiations between region. He agreed that trade unions should be free
the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) and the ILWU Longshore Division. SSA was widely viewed as the most confrontational employer in the PMA. The Bush administration intervened directly on the side of SSA and the PMA, issuing a Taft-Hartley injunction against the union and threatening reprisals against the ILWU if the union exercised its labor rights.

SSA started rubbing shouldn't be with the Bush national security apparatus in other areas as well. In May 2003 the company was a founding member of the Marine Terminal Operators Discussion Agreement, a forum in which shippers talk with U.S. government authorities about security issues.

The group was ostensibly created to make shipping containers secure from tampering by terrorists or narcotics smugglers, but the initiative gave SSA an even closer relationship with the government in an area with a great impact on the jobs of longshore workers.

The battles over the ILWU longshore contract finally ended with a new agreement in November 2002. By then the administration was already ramping up its preparations for the invasion of Iraq, as the Downing Street memo now clearly shows. The relationship between SSA and the administration during the longshore war was as close as it could be: SSA needed the political cover that came with the contracts, which basically excluded the Iraqis who historically did this work. Then, on July 16, 2003, SSA began accepting contracts from the Department of Defense, building container, breakbulk and roll-on-roll-off shipments. Despite its dilapidated state, Um Qasr is still a highly developed facility, with 23 berths for ships, four modern container cranes and a grain and cement dock. (Oil exports are handled through another, unrelated facility.) It was therefore an important achievement for the ports, which belong to the Iraqi people.  

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MEET THE NEW BOSS

When power was handed over to a supposedly independent government in June 2004, the transition from the Free Trade Area of the Americas

On Sept. 19, 2003 the CPA published Order No. 39, which permits 100 percent foreign ownership of businesses, except for the oil industry, and allows profits to be sent out of Iraq to the foreign compa-

nation's home country. Tom Foley, a Bush fundraiser who then directed private sector development for the CPA, announced a list of state enterprises to be sold off, including cement and fertilizer plants, phosphate and sulfur mines, pharmaceutical facto-

ries and the country's airlines.

Order No. 37, also issued Sept. 19, suspend-

ed income and property taxes for the year, and it exempted a list of industrial and corporate ac-

tions in the future of 15 percent. Right-wing ideologues haven’t been able to get the U.S. Congress to pass a flat tax proposal, and they’ve been talking of making the exemption a permanent feature of tax policy.

Meanwhile, conferences began to take place once or twice a week in Washington, D.C. and London, in which Iraqi enterprises and contracts were put on display, and transnational corpora-

tions came to examine profit-making opportu-

nities. Just one conference held Dec. 10, 2003 at Washington’s National Press Club by Equity International, a business consulting service, fea-

The CPA, announced a list of state enterprises to be privatized, and that is why it

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C A L I F O R N I A G O V E R N O R

The board’s three, Dave Freiboth of the IBJ, Southern California representative Larry Carlton of Local 46 and Arthur Reeves of Local 142, reported that the union’s finances were healthy. The International spent $134,000 less than it took in during the second quarter of 2006. The trustees reviewed a draft status quo budget for 2006-2009 to be used as a starting point for a budget proposal to be brought to the International Convention in May 2006. The trustees will meet again in October to prepare a revised budget for consideration at its December meeting so that a budget will be ready for the Convention to review.

The board also reviewed the union’s financial report for the first half of 2005, making sure everything is in order.

International Vice President, Mainland Bob McElrath reported to the board on the officers’ attendance at the AFL-CIO Convention in Chicago the month before. McElrath, International President Jim Spinosa, International Vice President Wesley Fennel, National Secretary-Treasurer Willis Adams and Coast Committeeman Joe Wenz were the ILWU representatives to the convention. Alternate delegates Local 142 President Fred Hargreaves, warehouse Local 17 President, Treasure Peder and IBU Region 37 Director Richard Gurtz also attended. The officers reviewed a motion that would have given the ILWU a seat on the board of the AFL-CIO.

The board then discussed what the ILWU would do about its membership in the AFL-CIO and what it should remain in the federation. No decision was made and the issue will be further discussed at the ILWU’s next meeting in December.

Of note, Pete Peter Olney reported to the board on the ongoing campaign to organize the 650 workers at the Blue Diamond Growers processing plant in Sacramento, the biggest almond plant in the world. The ILWU has met with union and management to form a solid committee in the plant of 55 workers and are moving to use various angles to gain support and pressure the company for recognition.

The board also dealt with issues brought by members of mining and mineral processing Local 30 in the Southern California desert. The board reviewed an article in a local paper and decided that the International will oversee a rerun of the local’s recall of The Day’s. The board also passed three Statements of Policy (see below), one on the ILWU’s role in the anti-war movement, the anti-worker ballot initiatives Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is backing, another in support of the United Farm Workers’ boycott of Gallo wines, and another in support of the AFL-CIO’s campaign to “Save Medicare.”

The board dedicated its meeting to the memory of Kim Miles, the first ILWU longshore woman killed on the job (see story page 1).

STATEMENT OF POLICY OPPOSING CALIFORNIA GOVERNOR ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER’S SPECIAL ELECTION AND ADDITIONAL INITIATIVES

California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has called a special off-year election for Nov. 8, 2005 so he can put before the voters a batch of initiatives that aim to strip workers’ rights and give him more power to bash them in the future. This stunt will cost the financially strapped state an estimated $80 million.

“Get it straight,” Schwarzenegger told MSNBC TV March 14. “It’s the unions that I am against.” The list of union “special interest” disproportionate to the amount of money union members contribute.

That money paid to get his bills on the ballot, including Proposition 75, a reform that would allow initiated concepts to be swept away by 2010 instead of 2017, the goal at one time. Schwarzenegger raked in $23 million in the first six months of 2005 and plans to raise much more in the four months before the election.

The vast bulk comes from big corporate interests. Schwarzenegger has been traveling the country raising money from out of state Republicans for these measures because common wisdom is that California governor can go to the White House.

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The CLC retained Ken Georgetti as its President and upheld its commitment to its smaller unions by electing the largest wine-making company E&J Gallo Vineyards as its vice president. The CLC will support its members by conducting training for campaign coordinators and union organizers. Members will be trained in communicating for public hearings and governmental bodies.

The CLC will fight for Canada’s highest wages, better working conditions and pensions. They don’t believe they have the right to organize at all, and his actions have won the condemnation of the International Labor organization. Canada’s Prime Minister, Paul Martin, comes from a family that has a stake in the company that has a second line that has run afoul of labor in the past. The CLC will take on the task of organizing workers in all areas, ethnicities and languages under one organization and turn that into political and economic power.

The CLC’s Executive Council issued a statement against corporate business practices and the right wing policies that are present a gold mine for private corporations, the CLC warns that Canada’s vast resources could be up for grabs by multinational corporations.

Canada’s longshore Local 500 proposed to make proposals to the body. The CLC wants to see them canceled. New agreements must support work-er rights and fair trade. The CLC also wants the elimination of neo-liberal policies that diminish national sovereignty and open the country for corporate control.

The convention passed policy papers against privatization. In the face of trade agreements sanctioning the “investor rights” of foreign companies, the CLC warns that Canada’s vast resources could also present a gold mine for private corporations.

As part of its inclusionary policies, the CLC allows individual locals to make proposals to the body. Canada’s longshore Local 500 proposed a resolution to set up a committee to recommend how to finally implement a resolution passed at its founding convention in 1956 that called for the establishment of “an alternate political force based on the needs of workers, farmers and similar groups...interest ed in basic social reforms and reconstruction through our parliamentary system of governments.”

In another resolution, Local 500 pledged that all candidates support ed by labor should also support the CLC’s legislative program.

CLC members, including ILWU Canada, can rely on the CLC for support from the worksite to the halls of Parliament whenever their issues are on the line.

“The CLC continues to support the ILWU in opposing unfair back- ground checks and screening of dock- ers,” Dufresne said.

Gallo then entered a legal campaign to sign decertification petitions and supervisors directing workers to sign decertification petitions and promising better pay and benefits in exchange for ousting the UW. The union protested the company actions and the CLC’s Cultural Labor Relations Board (ALRB) bloodstream into the ballots

Because of "the seriousness of the allegations," the ALRB found merit in the allegations and issued a formal complaint against Gallo in April 2003 and issued an order directing the company to cease and desist. A judge ruled the company had in fact violated state labor law. Since then Gallo has revived the same defense faith or agree to the extension of benefits to workers hired through farm labor contractors. In response the UW has called for a boycott of all Gallo-owned brands of wines.

The ILWU is also proposing to make proposals to the body. The ILWU in opposing unfair background checks and screening of dockers to the high costs of Wal-Mart and required by Wal-Mart’s business practices.

The United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) has launched the Wake-Up Wal-Mart campaign and Wake-Up Wal-Mart campaign to support the efforts of Wal-Mart and its anti-union business model. The United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) has launched the Wake-Up Wal-Mart campaign to support the efforts of labor rights, child labor violations, exploiting immigrant labor and is the defen- dant in a gender discrimination suit affecting 2 million current and for- mer female employees. Wal-Mart has also consistently denied workers their democratic right to organize and has even gone so far as to shut down a store to prevent a union.

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The Wake-Up Wal-Mart campaign is bringing together grassroots commun- ity leaders, citizens, workers and union members who have awakened to the high costs of Wal-Mart and re- cognize Wal-Mart's anti-union impact on our jobs, our wages, our health care and our communities.

The ILWU commits to support- ing the national Wake-Up Wal-Mart campaign to build a nation-wide grassroots movement by joining local labor and community coalitions and to supporting efforts to build a global coalition to ensure that Wal-Mart’s anti-union business model does not become established internationally.

Tony Dufresne addresses the Canadian Labor Congress convention.

by Tom Price

The conventional outlook of Wal-Mart is to make sure the minimum wage is about 60% of its largest competitors in the U.S. It’s poor health care cover-

age, with high deductibles and costly premiums, combined with poverty-level wages, forces tens of thousands of its employees onto taxpayer-funded public health care, resulting in costs that are added to the public sector's bottom line.

The United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) has launched the Wake-Up Wal-Mart campaign with the goal of changing Wal-Mart by building local community coalitions at every Wal-Mart location in the U.S. The UFCW in conjunction with the AFL-CIO, is building a global coalition among unions, global federation and other groups that speak for the workers who are affect- ed by Wal-Mart’s business practices.

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BLOODY THURSDAY—solemn and joyous

by Tom Price

Longshore workers took July 5 off to remember the tragic incidents up and down the Coast that lead to the founding of the ILWU. On that day 71 years ago Marine Cooks and Stewards’ Association member Louie Henningsen and longshoreman Dickie Parker had been killed by gunfire. More than 4,000 ILWU members, retirees, friends and families joined Bloody Thursday at Peck Park. Newly elected Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa spent two hours shaking hands with his many supporters, and the kids had waterslides, face painting and plenty of hot dogs. “Art Almeida was our historian for the day,” said David Ross Sr., one of the event organizers. “He explained what the guys in 1934 did for us. If they could only see what we have today.”

The remembrance finished with dancing to several bands, including SFA, a band featuring members’ kids, and Sal Rodriguez and the All Star Band, with musicians from Ray Charles’ band and other famous bands.

In San Francisco, retirees, friends and families joined longshore Local 10 members at the big hall on North Point St. to remember the two strikers gunned down a few blocks away. As the ILWU Drill Team stood at attention, everyone howed their hands and looked at the silhouettes of the two brothers painted on the sidewalk.

“We’re also here to celebrate the fact that we have something to remember,” longshore Local 10 President Ted Sundet said. “The only thing better than a person, a dream or a union ever dies is when you forget about it, when you forget what it took to obtain what we have today.”

Longshoreman Ben Johnson read a passage from South African feminist Olive Schreiner’s “Story of an African Farm.” “Where I lie down worn out, other men will stand, young and fresh,” he read. By the steps that I have cut they will climb; by the stairs that I have built they will mount. They will never know the name of the man who made them.”

Ben is the son of Local 10’s Joe Johnson, a former secretary-treasurer of the Marine Cooks and Stewards’ union and a longtime speaker at Bloody Thursday rallies before his death in 2000.

Portland area locals remembered Bloody Thursday at Oaks Park. Members and retirees laid a wreath on the river in honor of those who died or were wounded 71 years ago. Local 5 President Kristi Lovato recalled the significance the remembrance has for Local 5 people. “We got our charter five years ago and it’s good to be around folks who have been in the ILWU for a long time,” Lovato said. “It gives us a sense of the larger community of the ILWU, to celebrate who we are with the larger community.”

Local 8 President Leal Sundet brought the past into the present and future. “It was in times of uncertainty and hope that our modern union was formed,” Sundet said. “It was formed from the blood of July 5th and struggle of that generation. It was that generation and generations to follow that made us what we are today—a proud, powerful and well-respected defender of not just longshoremen, but also the working class.”

Sundet finished with: “Today, we honor the dead on this holy memorial day we call ‘Bloody Thursday.’ Tomorrow we reenter the never-ending struggle to survive.”

Seattle retirees laying a wreath at Shelvy Daffron’s grave. Left to right: Bob Swanson, Pete Kollen, Rudy Martinez and Bob Rogers.

Seattle area retirees began the day by laying a wreath on Shelvy Daffron’s grave. Later longshore Local 19 retiree Art Mink spoke from the stage at the union’s Vasa Park picnic. He told the story of the 1934 strike and how that victory led to the end of the humiliating “shape up” system of hiring and the beginning of a real union hiring hall. Nearly 1,000 members, friends and family turned out. Members of the Federated Auxiliaries, retirees, clerks’ Local 52 and bosses’ Local 98 helped. The band “Hot Cargo,” composed of ILWU casuals, sang labor songs. The kids had plenty of games, washable tattoos, arts and crafts and swimming.

“We wanted the casuals to know they were welcome,” Scott Martinez, one of the event organizers said. “That way, when contract time comes around, they’ll know what family they belong to.”

By this time Local 10, San Francisco had already shown their support affecting the whole port and at Seattle, Herald Ugles, Local 19 President, had already advised cruise lines of possible job action.

It was not until the day before the Carnival Spirit arrived in Vancouver that correspondence satisfactory to ILWU Alaska was received and U.S. jobs were returned to U.S. citizens. ILWU Alaska President Carl Norman has to be commended for his actions and leadership in an unpredictable and, at times, hostile atmosphere.

Brothers and sisters, solidarity such as this will be key to our future. Long live the ILWU.

Tim Footman
Second Vice-President
ILWU Canada

DEADLY COURSE

“Stay on course,” Mr. Bush has said so many times. His mantra has become a course of death for so many beautiful young men and women. Imagine that these young soldiers are on a ship and I am the captain. On the radar dead ahead is a major hurricane. I inform the president of the shipping company, who is safe on dry land, of the approaching perfect storm. “Follow my orders!” the president insists on course.

How would you feel if your child was on that ship and I, afraid of losing the captain, had to order the ship’s crew to stay on course rather than go around and avert the storm, thus losing the man and endangering everyone else? You would probably be as eager to offer their thoughts, ideas and constructive criticism. At the first meeting, when volunteers were asked to work the ship, after being advised of the likelihood of being arrested, such was the reaction, that a lottery was needed for selection.

At Whittier, with limited accommodation, everyone shared beds or slept on the floor before venturing out onto the dock at 1 a.m. in torrential rain and gusting freezing winds. While the actions on the dock at Whittier were solid and ongoing, many others were also active for the cause.

After the first brother was arrested, ILWU Canada President Tom Dufresne and Local 500, Vancouver, President Bob Ashton were immediately contacted.

With the Carnical Spirit, the port and stevedoring companies of Local 500 workers’ potential reaction to the injustice taking place in Alaska. Arresting longshoremen for freedom of speech was definitely not on.

A call was then made to the ITF’s west coast coordinator Jeff Engels, who traveled to Alaska had never met Bob Rogers.

Seafood processing and packing and plenty of hot dogs. "It gives us a sense of the larger community of the ILWU, to celebrate who we are with the larger community."

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Tim Footman
Second Vice-President
ILWU Canada
Kimberly Kuchman-Miles

by Tom Price

Longshore retired, deceased and survivors

RECENT RETIREES: Local 8—Jonathan Woodward; Local 10—Lee Lynch Jr., Charles Dunn, James Tavaschelle; Local 13—Edward A. Ponce, Russel A. Smith, Pedro A. Puig, James Woerner, Darinko Dragovich, Andrew S. Garcia, Joseph Pederson; Local 19—Rodney Ulmer, Terry Conklin; Local 21—Keith Raapanna; Local 23—Gary Hoath; Local 32—Robert Burgess; Local 40—Jan Searing; Local 52—Michael Herson; Local 63—Ronald Sibley, Howard Bentila, Julio Saldana, Rudolph Azpeitia, Thomas Tran, Walter Woodworth; Local 91—Cleveland Givens, William Y. Nelson.

DECEASED: Local 8—Henning Hellervic (Phyllis); Local 10—Hurvie Ford (Bertha), William Cannady (Josie), Glenn Cotton (Janice), Charlie Jackson (Gloria); Danny Martin (Gayle), John Lawrence, Jesse Davis; Local 13—Lawrence Hansen (Clara), Raymond Amesquaa (Selsele and Sye), Roland Armenta; Local 19—Alfred Blevins Jr. (Shirley), Pete Starkovich (Betty), Steven Jacroux (Merridee), Jerzy Tyler, Robert Pelland; Local 21—Lester Roberts (Leona), Wayne Ericksson; Local 23—Morris Kinzler (Barbara); Local 24—Ruben L. Smith; Local 32—Benjamin Malia (Dorothy), Howard Hanson, Francisco Jovel; Local 32—Raymond Bjornson, Shirley Gardlenhire; Local 54—Nolan Walker (Lois); Local 63—William Coleman (Patty), Local 91—James Green (Norma); Local 94—Robert Nelson (Jennie), Raymond R. Hernandez (Nellie).

DECEASED SURVIVORS: Local 5—Gary Heath; Local 8—Debbi Martin, Josephine Collins, May Huertas, Shirley Murray; Local 12—Delores Decker; Local 19—Irene Nikula; Local 21—Ora Brown; Local 23—Christine Goretii, Olivia Gill; Local 54—Eva White, Roxie Matthews; Local 63—Dorothy McMaster; Local 92—Grace Biggs, Marie Smoole.

Coast Education Committee Benefits Workshop

We all know we have good benefits. Learn how to use them wisely and protect them into the future. Each area will have an area benefits workshop on the dates above. Notice of the Workshops will be mailed to your home. Spouses are invited to share in information essential to you and your family’s security and well being. Your Coast Committee, Education Committee, Area Directors and Coast Benefits Specialist urge everyone to plan on being there. Lunch will be provided.

PUGET SOUND & WASHINGTON AREA
Locals 7, 19, 23, 24, 25, 27, 32, 47, 51, 52, 98
• 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM
October 11, 2005

COLUMBIA RIVER & OREGON COAST AREA
Locals 4, 8, 12, 21, 40, 50, 52
• 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM
October 3, 2005

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
Locals 13, 26 Guards, 29, 63, 94
• 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM
October 25, 2005

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA
Locals 10, 14, 18, 34, 57, 91
• 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM
October 27, 2005
A Helping Hand…

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San Pedro, CA 90731
(310) 547-9966

ADRP—Northern California
Norm McLeod
400 North Point
San Francisco, CA 94133
(415) 776-8363

ILWU WAREHOUSE DIVISION

DARE—Northern California
Gary Alkinson
22593 Hesperian Blvd., Ste. 277
Hayward, CA 94541
(800) 772-8288

ADRP—Northern California
Jim Copp
3054 N.E. Glisan, Ste. 2
Portland, OR 97232
(503) 231-4882

ADRP—Washington
Donnie Schwedeman
3600 Port of Tacoma Rd. #503
Tacoma, WA 98424
(253) 922-8913

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