



The DISPATCHER

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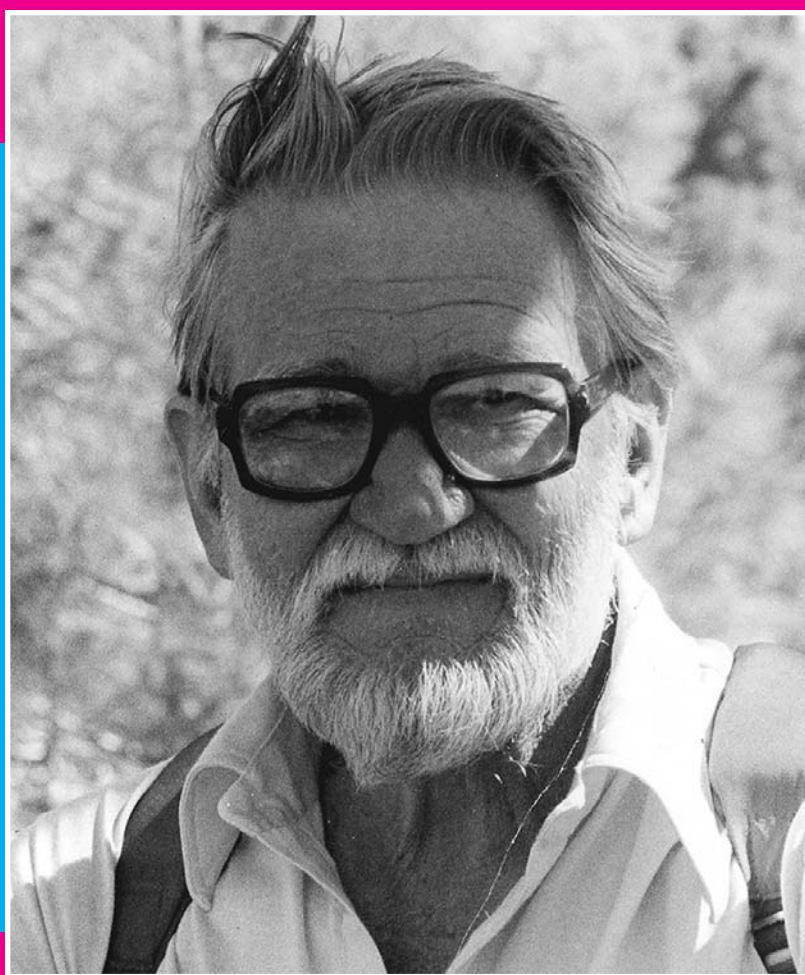
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Inside Line

A personal touch

You'll see something a little bit different in this issue. Each March, *The Dispatcher* tries to include a story or two on women's issues, but this year's features take a more personal tack.

We don't give grim numbers, even though a billion women around the world will be victims of sexual violence sometime in their lives, according to Amnesty International. We don't talk about the persistent wage gap, even though U.S. women still earn only about three-fourths of what men earn. We don't mention the fact that households headed by women are three times more likely to be poor, or that only a third of women get health insurance on the job, compared with 53 percent of men.

Instead, we look at the interplay between society's expectations and women's needs, and the difficulty of fighting your demons and still organizing.

Women in the tugboat world face the routine discrimination and tunnel vision about what they can and should do, Maria Brooks points out in her feature, "The Daughters of Tugboat Annie" on pages 10-11. But the women Brooks interviews also probe the tensions between gaining respect in "men's work" and retaining their womanliness—and between motherhood and a vital life in the world of work.

Julia Ruuttilla survived domestic violence, botched abortions and crushing depression—all while carrying on as a tireless organizer and agitator. "Ruuttilla's life in the Pacific Northwest reveals a great deal about the lives of activist radical women who have so often been compelled to sacrifice or compromise their personal lives in order to act out their political beliefs," wrote ILWU Education Director and Librarian Gene Vrana in his review of her oral history, "Sticking to the Union" on page 12. A long-time ILWU activist, Ruuttilla wrote for *The Dispatcher* for more than 40 years and helped mold the ILWU Auxiliaries into a political force.

The short report on page 7 points to more recent examples of women's union organizing and the lessons they offer. Women also played key roles in the ongoing grocery workers struggle (see page 5 for more UFCW updates) and in ILWU Local 5's just-concluded contract fight at Powell's Books (see page 3).

—Marcy Rein,
ILWU Organizing Dept.

Editor's note:

This issue we begin a new series on the Bush administration's policies attacking working people (see page 6). Each story in the series focuses on a specific Bush social atrocity and is a condensed version of a chapter of a new book "The War at Home: The Bush-Corporate Offensive Against American Workers and Their Unions" scheduled for release this summer by National Writers Union activist Jack Rasmus. Rasmus is also the author of "Fire on Pier 32," a dramatic play capturing the history of the ILWU from its beginnings in 1934 to the 2002 longshore contract struggle. The accompanying cartoons in the series are from our very own award-winning graphic artist Jim Swanson. Enjoy, copy, distribute.

—Steve Stallone,
Editor

PRESIDENT'S REPORT
Outsource Bush's job

By James Spinosa
ILWU International President

News reports and entire books have been written recently detailing the unbelievable statements coming out of the mouth of George W. Bush, from the politically motivated lies to the laughably absurd gaffes. But rarely have any of his pronouncements fused both those elements so seamlessly as his recent declaration that outsourcing American jobs is good for the national economy and American workers. Employers save so much money outsourcing, Bush argues, that they will be able to expand their operations and eventually hire more American workers.

Try explaining that logic to the people standing in the unemployment lines, or to the laid-off mother whose new job doesn't have health insurance when her kids get sick, or the family of a Midwest industrial worker that just lost their home. Economic theorists never seem to be able to figure cruelty and suffering into their calculations.

But working people see it, we feel it and we have to endure and struggle to overcome it. Sometimes we are more successful than others, but the scars of those experiences expose truths we can never forget, deny or ignore no matter how much the Bush public relations flaks spin, speculate and obscure.

ILWU members are all too familiar with the "benefits" of outsourcing. Once our brothers and sisters toiling in Hawaii's big sugar and pineapple industries fought, struck and won the best agricultural work-

er contracts in the world, the corporate ag companies took off for more exploitable labor in Thailand and the Philippines. Warehouse Local 6 members at the Hexcel plant in Livermore, California have been given notice that the company intends to move its operations to Japan and the right-to-work state of Utah. And our Longshore Division is constantly fighting shipowners who force seafarers to do our lashing work and stevedoring companies who use computer technology to secretly outsource ILWU marine clerks' work to non-union employees. The main issue in our protracted 2002 longshore contract struggle was keeping employers from using technology to outsource our jobs.

Even though all the polls show Bush is most vulnerable on domestic issues like the economy and jobs, he continues to trumpet the same failed policies as if no one is noticing that jobs continue to disappear, wages continue to drop and corporate profits continue to increase at a record pace. Fortunately for the entire American labor movement that has dedicated itself to the cause of laying off Bush, he keeps stepping in it knee-high and sticking his foot in his mouth.

But it's not just on domestic issues that Bush is making mis-

steps and misstatements. Even in his foreign policy, in his war on terrorism and his war in Iraq, in those issues that he planned to base his reelection campaign on, he is floundering. A year after the invasion of Iraq, the occupation of that country continues to be a bloody mess, with Americans and Iraqis dying in larger numbers than in the war itself. Billions of American taxpayer dollars are being spent there, using up resources so desperately needed in this country.

All the while Bush's corporate buddies are getting billion-dollar, no-bid contracts and then are getting caught overcharging the government. The Iraqi infrastructure American bombs destroyed a year ago still hasn't been rebuilt by the American contractors, leaving the local population with miserable living conditions. Iraqi workers face 70 percent unemployment, forcing them to work for the low wage scales imposed by the occupiers who in turn enforce Saddam Hussein's old law banning union organizing.

No wonder the conflict continues to escalate and Bush's plan to hand over power to some form of Iraqi self-rule by June 30 looks less and less like an exit strategy and more and more like an election ploy.

Meanwhile, the evidence of the lies propping up his policies piles up, showing a pattern of deception and a strategy of deceit.

Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, the ones we were shown U.S. intelligence satellite photos of the ones that were an imminent danger requiring preemptive war, turn out to not exist. The real and higher costs of the Bush pro-pharmaceuti-

cal company Medicare bill were withheld by the Bush administration until Congress passed it. And new revelations suggest Bush ignored numerous warnings of imminent terrorist attacks by his own advisors before Sept. 11, 2001. His credibility has been blown out of the water.

Not since the Supreme Court installed him as president has Bush been so vulnerable. We must take this moment to drive an electoral stake through his political heart once and for all. That this is the program of the ILWU—the democratically elected delegates to our International Convention last year voted to make Bush's defeat the number one priority of our union—shows the wisdom of the rank and file. As long as Bush is in power, working people in this country will be under attack and on the defensive.

We only have a few more months to assure Bush's defeat and secure our future. We have him on the ropes, but we must finish the job. That will take all of us doing all we can. You can get involved in the union's efforts by contacting your local officers and volunteering. You can also see the information on page 4 of this issue of *The Dispatcher* to find the way you can contribute financially to this campaign. Let's give Bush his pink slip.



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AROUND THE UNION

TROUBLE BEHIND, TROUBLE AHEAD FOR LOCAL 6

OAKLAND, CA—Warehouse Local 6 is back in the black and back on track, its officers reported to its 57th annual convention, held here Feb. 28. But like unions all over, Local 6 is looking at health costs shooting up, houses closing down, and the do-or-die political fight looming in November.

“The Local is standing on its own,” said President Richard Sierras. “We’ve made cuts and we’re back to normal.”

By dint of some serious belt-tightening, the local managed to cover its expenses in 2003, finishing without a deficit for the first time in six years. The officers gave up their meal money, took cuts in their car allowances and took on extra work. They picked up the load for South Bay/Fresno Business Agent Eddie Gutierrez after he was laid off last April, and covered for TOPS Division BA Jill Duke after she retired in June. The office staff got cut by layoffs and retirement, so they have had to carry extra tasks as well. And the membership stepped up, paying a \$40 per person one-time assessment voted

at last year’s convention.

“I want to give credit to everyone,” BA Darrin Woodard told the convention. “This was a collective effort.”

That same spirit of unity showed in members’ response to contract negotiations. The Local renegotiated the master warehouse contract last year, along with agreements at 12 other houses. Maintenance of health benefits proved the sticking point all around.

Members at Feralloy, C&H Sugar, Unisource and the California State Automobile Assn. rejected their employers’ “last, best and final offers” and prepared to strike, as did those covered by the master contract. But by standing firm, they avoided having to walk out. Though they took some hits, they managed to protect retirees and in most cases avoid out-of-pocket payments on health premiums.

The local saw seven houses shut down last year and got notice that two more will close soon. Nationwide Paper, Bay Sheets and Premier Roasters moved where labor and land is cheaper. Naismith Oakland filed bankruptcy. Dunhill and Pacific Rolling Door couldn’t compete with cheaper products from bigger firms,

Sierras said.

“Our members are getting left behind in the race to the bottom,” he said. The closures hit around 320 members.

The chill wind out of Washington blew away the Local 6 contract with Menzies at San Jose Airport. Menzies provides baggage-handling and cleaning services at nine airports around the country. When a group of Menzies workers in Portland, Oregon tried to organize in 2002, the NLRB decided that all Menzies workers should fall under the Railway Labor Act (RLA), meaning their work is considered so important to national security their collective bargaining rights are restricted. This not only wrecked the drive, but voided all the local contracts between Menzies and the ILWU, HERE, the Teamsters and the Machinists, because the RLA also requires unions to organize and negotiate for national bargaining units. Local 6 is now talking with the other unions about forming a joint council to bargain a new agreement for the members at the San Jose Airport. Meanwhile, Menzies lost its contracts with airlines at the Oakland Airport, throwing about 120 other Local 6 members out of work.

The urgent need for regime

change at home dominated the remarks of all the invited guests at the convention and colored the comments of the local officers as well. ILWU International Secretary-Treasurer Willie Adams, Coast Committeeman Joe Wenzl, Local 10 President Henry Graham, Local 34 President Richard Cavalli, Local 17 Secretary-Treasurer Jack Wyatt, Sr., California AFL-CIO Executive Secretary-Treasurer Art Pulaski, U.S. Rep. Barbara Lee (D-Oakland) and Teamsters Port Division head Chuck Mack all drove home the need for political involvement.

“Political decisions will determine our effectiveness and our very survival,” Mack said. “We have to organize this year as never before to change the direction this country is going.”

“For American workers the floor has dropped as millions of jobs are shipped overseas,” said Local 6 Secretary-Treasurer Fred Pecker. “Overtime pay is under attack, hundreds of thousands of federal workers have lost their bargaining rights and laws like the Patriot Act undermine our basic freedoms. This is unacceptable. Each of us needs to get involved and then bring a co-worker along. It is our job to work with each other and take back America!”

—Marcy Rein

Local 5 signs new deal



Scott McCaughey

ILWU Local 5 President Mary Winzig (leaning over table) signed the local’s second contract with Powell’s Books March 31. (From left) Powell’s CEO for Operations, Ann Smith, Powell’s owner Michael Powell and Local 5 bargaining team member Kevin Maniak. Bargaining team members not pictured are Tracey Trudeau, Jim Cowing, Jeff Hensley, Ryan Takas, John McMahon and Gin Enguehard.

Members of warehouse, retail and allied workers Local 5 ratified the new agreement by a vote of 233 to 6 in mail-in balloting that concluded March 29. The three-and-a-half year contract took effect April 1.

“This agreement bucks the national trend of workers losing their employer-paid affordable health care,” Winzig said. “That, along with wage increases and stronger language to protect people on the job, makes this a victory all round.”

Powell’s will continue to foot the whole bill for visits to doctors on the preferred provider list, and will cover 80 percent of the cost of visits to doctors not on the list. Workers’ monthly premiums will continue at 15 percent of Powell’s actual health care costs until April 2006, when they will go up to 16 percent. Annual wage raises of two percent should keep Local 5 members ahead of the increase in the cost of living in Portland.

“The new agreement includes several language changes that will help the union build its power on the shop floor,” said Local 8 Labor Relations Committee member Leal Sundet, who worked closely with the Local 5 bargaining team. “For one thing, eliminating merit increases will reduce management’s control.”

Union representatives will also have more access to members at work and fewer restrictions on their ability to conduct investigations and other union business. Management will have to notify the union of safety violations and discipline, and the union will get 15 minutes of orientation time with each new employee on the clock.

“We will get face time with everyone so we can say, ‘Here’s the union, contact us if you have any problems,’” said Local 5 Union Representative Ryan Van Winkle.

ILWU International Vice President Bob McEllrath spent considerable time in negotiations with Local 5, and gave the local full access to one of the union’s attorneys, Rob Remar of Leonard, Carder LLP. The help from the International proved invaluable, Winzig said.

“Bob made an enormous contribution in leading the bargaining team and educating us on the process,” Winzig said. “He was amazing.”

McEllrath offered his congratulations to the bargaining team and the local.

“The negotiating team stayed focused on the issues and worked long and hard. Once again the support of the membership, getting behind the team and sticking with them, proved that solidarity helps in getting a contract,” he said. “And I want to personally thank Leal Sundet for all the work he did.”

—Marcy Rein

ILWU joins anti-war demos



Jeff Smith

ILWU longshore locals along the Columbia River and in the San Francisco Bay Area moved their March stop-work meetings to the first shift Saturday, March 20 so members could join in the anti-war demonstrations marking the one-year anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

About 12,000 people representing more than 120 organizations, including ILWU locals, participated in the Portland march and rally, making it one of the largest protest demonstrations the city has ever seen. They gathered in downtown’s Pioneer Square and marched around the city. Organizers arranged for volunteers to pull a mobile stage with a P.A. system that allowed speakers along the route to speak to the crowd at strategically chosen locations.

Palestinian-American Hala Gores addressed the crowd beside the *Oregonian* building, criticizing the city’s main newspaper for its support of the repressive Israeli policies in the occupied territories. Barbara Dudley, a PSU professor, spoke of the government’s attack on civil liberties in front of the Federal Courthouse, and of the need to repeal the Patriot Act. Nancy Gonzalez of SEIU 49 talked about the “janitors for justice” campaign in front of the Commonwealth Building in downtown Portland and of the importance of getting a contract with management there that would require the bosses to provide health insurance for janitors.

Jack Mulcahy of ILWU longshore Local 8 spoke of how the American occupation forces in Iraq busted into the headquarters of the Iraqi Federation of Workers Trade Unions Dec. 6, destroyed much of the building and contents of the office, and arrested eight union leaders. Mulcahy continued on to say that “while the government is waging war against the unions in Iraq, it is doing the same thing here in our own country. Last April 7, during a peaceful anti-war protest at the Port of Oakland police opened fire on demonstrators picketing SSA and APL.”

In San Francisco ILWU members joined tens of thousands of demonstrators marching from Dolores Park to Civic Center for a rally. There ILWU longshore Local 10 President Henry Graham and Business Agent Trent Willis addressed the gathering, announcing, to the roar of the crowd, that they had closed the local ports that day in protest of the war.

—Dispatcher staff report

WASHINGTON REPORT

ILWU testifies at Senate hearing on port security

By Lindsay McLaughlin
ILWU Legislative Director

Several weeks ago in the southern Israeli Port of Ashdod two suicide bombers infiltrated the port, killing 10 workers at a machine shop and injuring another 20. Currently, the Israeli government is investigating how the terrorists got into the country, including the possibility they hid in a container on board a ship to gain access. Investigators are looking into whether the real targets of the terrorists were chemical facilities within the port that could have killed hundreds of innocent people.

The U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation held a hearing on the state of American maritime security March 24, 2004. Mike Mitre, the Longshore Division's Director of Port Security, testified for the ILWU. The Committee wanted to know whether West Coast ports had made progress in securing the facilities or whether the incident in Israel could happen here. Mitre testified that real port security has not been achieved, and in some respects, U.S. ports are less secure than they were prior to the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

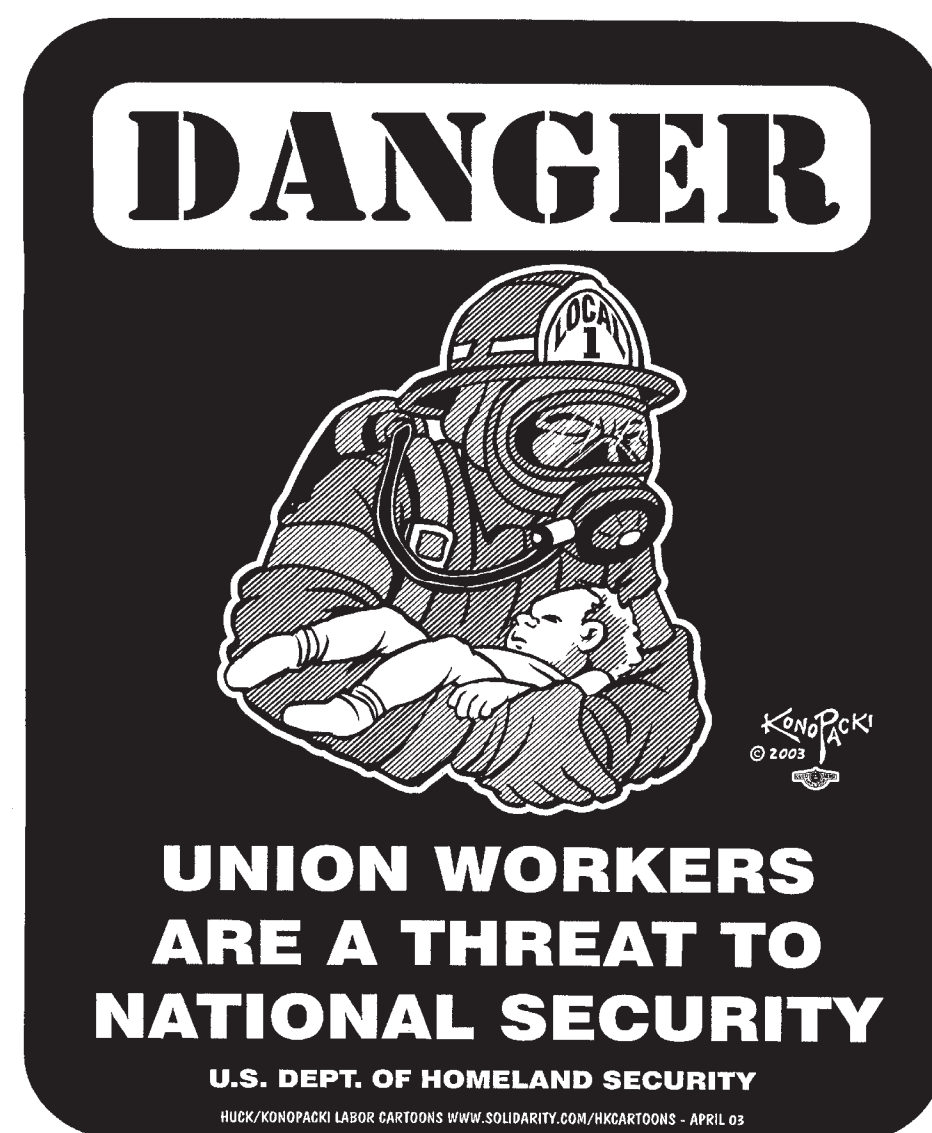
Mitre testified that, for example, most marine terminals have not initiated any new programs to check seals when containers enter a marine facility. The Coast Guard has issued rules requiring terminals to check seals when containers enter a facility and when containers are stored. So far the terminal operators have not complied, and have erroneously insisted that they do not have to comply until their facility security plans are approved by the Coast Guard. Some terminal operators actually discontinued the practice of verifying seals before and in months after Sept. 11, 2001.

Mitre emphasized the importance of checking the outside container seals. A broken seal would immediately alert the port facility that the container may have been tampered with and needs to be carefully inspected. A systematic check of container seals also provides authorities with a record of the parties responsible for placing the seal on any container that may be used for a terrorist attack.

Seal checks are vital to our national security. *Lloyd's List* reported on April 8, 2002, that 47 warheads were found on a foreign flag ship *La Tour* Feb. 9, 2002 at the Port of New York/New Jersey after the Coast Guard noticed that a "safety seal appeared to differ from the one put on the box when it was loaded." Port workers are prepared to perform security checks on the containers, but have been stymied by terminal operators more interested in moving cargo quickly and profitably than in taking the time for proper security.

Some terminal operators have suggested that technology such as cameras can do the job of seal checks, but this method has not proven effective. Cameras and scanners cannot tell if a seal has been tampered with. The human eye and intuition cannot be replaced with technology.

Government officials appear to be listening. The chair of the Homeland Security Committee, Rep. Christopher Cox (R-CA), was quoted in the *Orange County Register* as saying, "Stopping seal checks is definitely a matter of concern." Los Angeles Port Captain Peter Neffinger told the *Register*, "I know terminals see security as inconvenient and costly, and



it's hard to gauge a best return on any investment, but after July 1, we will prosecute any violations. It's part of the new cost of doing business."

At the hearing Mitre criticized the lack of regulations on the treatment of empty containers. There should be no disagreement over the need for an inspection and verification concerning containers marked as empty, he said. The fact that marine terminal operators routinely conducted inspections of empty containers in the past as a regular part of their security program to verify the absence of harmful contents and to detect and deter possible terrorist attacks, only adds to the viability of this procedure.

Mitre strongly urged the Coast Guard to mandate the inspection of empty containers. If there ever was to be an attack using an "empty" container to transport and stage explosives or chemical or biological agents, this would be the ideal manner to discover it. With the level and manner of intelligence gathering and the sophisticated techniques used by various organizations, nothing should be left to chance.

Sen. John Breaux (D-LA) asked the other panelists to respond to Mitre's assertion that empty containers pose a threat to national security. But the industry representative did not directly answer why they should not be inspected, mostly because there is no reasonable response. Mitre's written testimony said it best: "When there is a conflict between efficiency in the maritime transportation system versus additional security measures that will enhance the security of the system and our port communities, we believe that security should prevail."

Mitre also urged Congress and the Bush administration to adequately fund port security. When security plans are finalized, it is critical that money be made available for optimum security rather than minimal security. Coast Guard officials have said it will cost \$1.4 billion dollars in

the first year—and \$7.4 billion dollars over 10 years—just to make basic, necessary physical improvements at U.S. ports. But Bush is only asking for \$46 million in funding for this task in the year 2005.

Mitre spoke to the Senate Committee about the need to devise a "West Coast scenario" so that America could continue to move goods in the event of a terrorist attack. Mitre and his fellow legislative action committee member Peter Peyton have been looking at this issue and urging policymakers to plan for such an event. These Legislative Action Committee members are also looking at how we can build infrastructure for moving goods in a way that meets the security needs of our ports.

This testimony before the Senate Committee is only one step the ILWU has recently taken to raise the urgent need for port security before the nation's policymakers. ILWU International President James Spinoso wrote to Coast Guard Admiral Larry Hereth March 15, 2004 to urge the Coast Guard to take effective action to compel marine ter-

minal operators to immediately implement and maintain adequate security measures in accordance with the Maritime Transportation Security Act.

Out of frustration that terminal operators were shirking their duties to institute common sense security measures to keep port workers and communities safe, Spinoso asked the Coast Guard to issue a directive that all security measures for handling cargo should be implemented now without delay. Employers are relying on a technical final compliance date of July 1, 2004 in the Coast Guard regulations to put off what they should do today. Spinoso told the Coast Guard that the port security law mandates the Coast Guard requires terminal operators to put in place cargo security programs before the security plan is approved.

Further, Spinoso wrote, "Common sense would indicate that waiting until July 1, 2004 to institute necessary port security measures actually could heighten the risk of potential terrorism during this waiting period." Terminal operators know what they need to do to make our ports safer and more secure, and they need to do it now.

The ILWU has enlisted allies in the effort to get real port security. At the March meeting of the unions affiliated with the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO, the ILWU introduced a resolution entitled "Real Port Security Needed." It passed unanimously. The resolution called for the TTD to advocate real seaport security measures before the Coast Guard, the Bureau of Customs and Border Control, the Transportation Security Administration and other agencies with jurisdiction over seaport security. The TTD will inform members of Congress on the state of seaport security and support additional legislation if necessary to enhance seaport security and protect the rights of seaport workers. The TTD will also work to inform the general public through the media about the need to secure seaports.

The ILWU will hold its legislative conference in Washington, D.C. the week of April 26, 2004. Obtaining real port security will be a major issue for the ILWU delegates lobbying before Congress. You can help to by writing your member of Congress and letting them know that terminal operators should be living up to their responsibility and implementing security measures for handling cargo. This is a matter of true security for port workers and the port communities where ILWU families live.

The ILWU Political Action Fund

The ILWU Political Action Fund has a goal of raising more than \$500,000 for the union's work on the November 2004 elections and for contributions to pro-worker candidates' campaigns. The International officers and the Coast Committee are asking all members to donate \$50 each to the fund. All contributions are voluntary, are not part of your union dues or a condition of union membership. You can give more or less than the officers suggest—all contributions are valued—and there are no reprisals for giving less or not participating in the union's political activities. Contributions to the ILWU Political Action Fund are not tax deductible.

To satisfy federal election laws, please include with your check your name, address, occupation and employer. The ILWU International wants you to list your local number and registration number to track participation rates. Retirees are not eligible to donate to the ILWU PAF. They should make donations to the Pacific Coast Pensioners Association or other pensioner groups.

Donations should be sent to:

ILWU-PAF

1188 Franklin St., 4th Floor

San Francisco, CA 94109

Checks should be payable to: ILWU-PAF.

NorCal grocery workers grab the torch

by Marcy Rein

Cheering, chanting pandemonium broke out as the ILWU Drill Team stepped smartly into the UFCW mass meeting March 14. Around 900 members of nine Northern California locals had converged on the ILWU longshore Local 10 hall. Their banners ringed the balcony and their noise rattled the roof as they joined the yell raised by the Drill Team and their own chant team.

“UF-C-Double-U! Safeway, we’re coming through!” they hollered.

The energy unleashed at that opening carried through a day that was part pep-rally, part planning meeting for the upcoming Northern California grocery contract campaign. Smarting from the bitter end of the Southern California struggle just two weeks before, the members at the meeting vowed to learn its lessons and hold the line.

“Southern California began the war of 2004, and we’re going to win it!” said Local 839 Shop Steward Dorothy Smith.

After nearly five months on the picket lines, the 70,000 UFCW members in Southern California voted up a three-year contract marked by sharp cuts in wages and benefits for new hires. Current employees will see their wages stay flat, their pension accrual go down and their health care premiums go up, although they held off the premium increase until the last year of the deal.

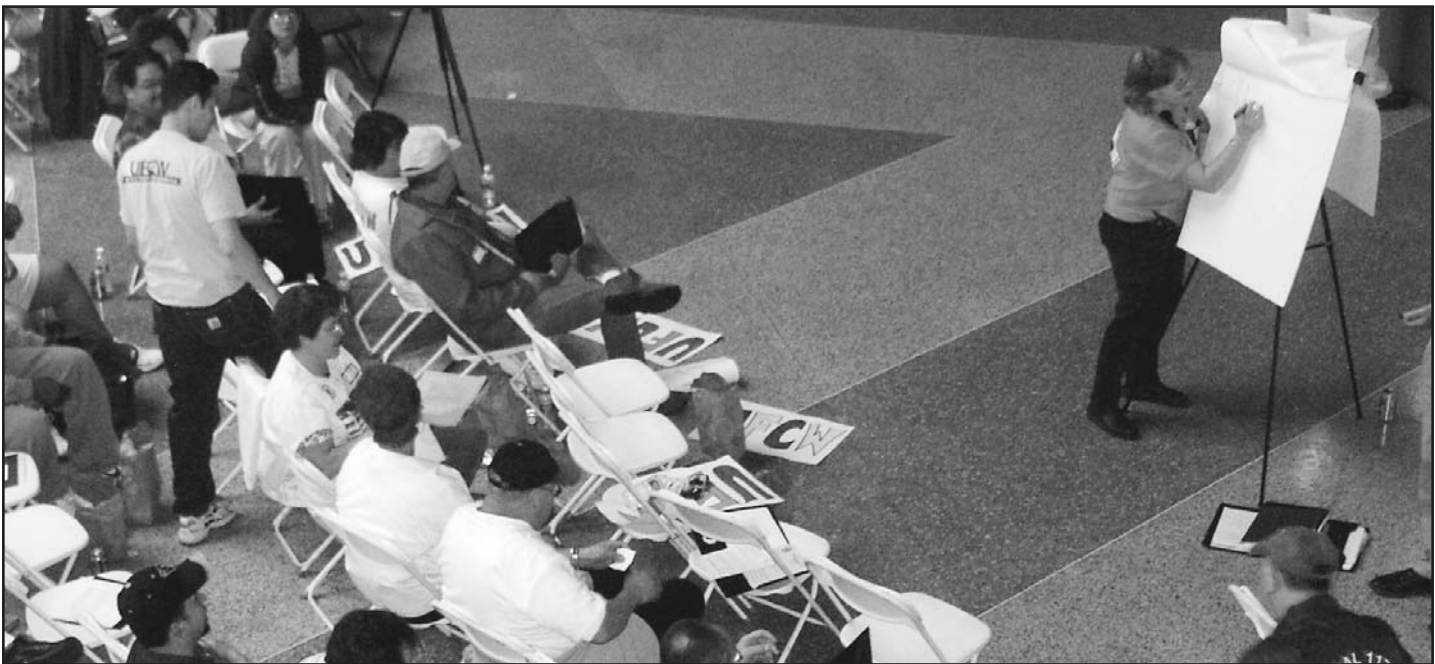
Watching the Southern California strike and lockout unfold, nine locals formed the Bay Area UFCW Coalition last October. They represent nearly 50,000 workers at Safeway, Albertsons, Ralphs, Cala, Raley’s and several independent stores. Eight of the locals—101, 120, 1179, 373R, 428, 648, 839 and 870—sign on to a master contract that expires Sept. 11, 2004. The union expects talks to begin mid-June. Sacramento-area Local 588 bargains alone. Its agreement expires July 17.

Each Coalition local hired an organizer for the contract campaign and began planning the mass meeting months ago, with help in the last weeks from the California Labor Federation and the AFL-CIO Western Region. They all know what they’re up against.

“The store managers are already telling us the contract from Southern California is coming to Northern California,” Local 839 President John Briley said in opening the meeting. “They’re expecting us to roll over and play dead,” he said, drawing shouts of “Boo!” and “No way!” from the crowd.

Following Briley, Rev. Phil Lawson, Rev. Carol Been and Fr. Louis Vitale of the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice delivered fighting invocations, and U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and Teamsters International Vice President Chuck Mack promised support. Then speakers from each local hit the mike.

The Coalition locals represent workers from Salinas in the Central Valley to Eureka. The members at the meeting ranged from 30-year veterans to baggers with just a few years



Mathew Hardy

After a fiery morning rally, Northern California UFCW members broke into work groups and dove into the details of their contract campaign.

on the job. But they all voiced the urgency of the looming fight not only for health care, but for decent living standards for working people.

“I worked my way through college at Safeway, and had a baby daughter,” said Vince Herrera of Local 428. “With the well-baby check-ups and the immunizations, the flu and earaches she had, I would still be in debt today if I didn’t have a well-funded benefit package,” he said. “This attack on our health care is like a rock dropping to the bottom of a pond. Everyone, not just retail workers, will feel the ripple.”

“I knew I was never going to get rich working at Safeway, but I could provide for my family,” said Local 870’s Diane Powe. “Now they want to take away health care and pensions, because rich people like [Safeway CEO] Steve Burd want to get richer. We built this country. We built this industry. Why should we take a hit because he wants more? When is enough enough?”

The speakers recognized the delegations from their locals, who stood amid more cheers and yells. And the crowd roared for Southern California strike veteran Mike DiLeo, and the representatives who’d come from locals all over the U.S. and Canada—from Washington State, Michigan, Hawaii, Kentucky and Calgary, Canada.

Over lunch, breakout groups of about 30 people discussed shop-floor and public strategies for the coming months. When the rank-and-file vigorously enforces their contract on the job, the employer will know they mean business—so the sessions began with a review of members’ rights under the contract and the National Labor Relations Act.

“We’re making sure people know the ins and outs of their contract,” said Local 648 President Mary Chambers.

Rev. Carol Been spoke to each group and encouraged people to sign up for outreach to clergy and congregations in their communities.

“Every faith tradition shares a commitment to justice,” she said. “That gives you powerful allies in getting your message to the public.”

After lunch, the meeting re-convened for a skit put on by members of Locals 648 and 1199 that envisioned a successful campaign—starting with apathetic and fearful workers in a captive audience meeting and ending with a group of members badgering Steve Burd till he gave up the fight. The audience booed, cheered and rose up on cue. By the end they were on their feet yelling and ready for the brief rally that wound up the day.

At the rally speakers from the broader labor movement pledged solidarity and support, including California Labor Federation Executive Secretary-Treasurer Art Pulaski, AFL-CIO Western Region Field Mobilization Coordinator Lisa Hoyos, San Francisco Central Labor Council head Walter Johnson and ILWU Local 10’s Trent Willis. Even though members of the ILWU longshore division have excellent health benefits, they’re still backing the UFCW fight, Willis said.

“There’s no way the ILWU is

going to sit back and watch workers be persecuted,” he said. “Every worker in this country is at risk and everyone deserves health care.”

Pulaski reminded the crowd that the fight for health care will extend to the ballot box this fall. The California legislature passed SB-2 last session, requiring employers that don’t offer health insurance to pay into a state fund for uninsured workers. But big retail interests funded an initiative that would repeal the measure—so labor will need to get out the vote to defend its gains.

As the rally ended, members streamed out of the Local 10 parking lot for a march around the Safeway across the street. And if they happened to look up when they filed past the back of the store, they would’ve seen a few Bay Area activists on the roof with home-made banners.

“Safeway: Don’t Destroy Workers’ Healthcare” read one. “Our Fight is On!” read the other.

To stay updated on the Northern California grocery workers’ campaign, go to www.bayareacoalition.org.

ILWU FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE GROCERY WORKERS

The Harry Bridges Institute established the Adopt-A-UFCW-Family program Dec. 29, 2003 to help the striking and locked-out grocery workers in Southern California. The HBI’s first official fundraising announcements were made at the Jan. 12, 2004 stop-work meetings of ILWU Locals 13, 63 and 94. The list below documents all the financial contributions from ILWU affiliates and members the HBI and *The Dispatcher* have been able to track. Many other individual contributions were sent directly to the UFCW.

- ILWU International - \$5,000.00
- ILWU Local 63 - \$25,000.00 per month for three months totaling \$75,000.00
- ILWU Local 63 - rank and file \$8,217.00
- ILWU Local 13 - \$100,000.00 directly to the UFCW for 272 families for healthcare
- ILWU Local 13 - rank and file \$38,534.91
- ILWU Local 94 - \$100.00 per member assessment totaling \$30,638.00 (an additional \$30,000. will come in next week)
- ILWU Local 94 rank and file - \$300.00
- ILWU Local 68 Port Pilots - \$4,000.00
- ILWU Local 68 rank and file - \$1,200.00
- ILWU Local 63 Office Clerical Unit - \$10,000.00 sent to UFCW trust for healthcare
- ILWU Local 63 Office Clerical rank and file - \$300.00
- ILWU Credit Union - \$5,000.00
- ILWU Southern California Pensioners Group - \$5,000.00
- ILWU Local 10 - \$50,000.00
- ILWU Local 46 - \$10,000
- ILWU Local 54 - \$2,000.00
- ILWU Local 34 - \$5,000.00
- ILWU Local 91 - \$1,000.00
- ILWU Local 21 general fund - \$100.00
- ILWU Local 19 rank and file - \$700.00
- ILWU Local 23 - \$1,000
- ILWU Local 8 - \$500
- ILWU Local 40 \$1,520
- ILWU Local 6 - \$3179.64
- ILWU Ladies Auxiliary #8 - \$200.00
- Adopt-A-UFCW-Family (miscellaneous contributions from community and daily mail) \$8,002.00

GRAND TOTAL—\$383,571.55



Marcy Rein

The March 14 mobilization ended with a quick, loud march around the Safeway across the street from the ILWU Local 10 hall.

Another Bush lie: tax cuts for jobs

By Jack Rasmus

During the three years of the Bush administration, more than 3 million jobs in the U.S. have disappeared, been destroyed, dismantled, vanished. Not since the early years of the Great Depression of the 1930s has America experienced three consecutive years of net job destruction. Nor has any president since Herbert Hoover faced the prospect of leaving office with the economy having fewer jobs than when he entered.

The Bush recession began in March 2001 and was declared officially over in November 2001, six months later. Two major tax cuts, plus a series of additional corporate tax breaks, were enacted between mid-2001 and 2003—tax cuts worth \$2.1 trillion—80 percent of which went directly to benefit those with incomes over \$147,000 a year.

American workers were promised at the time that these tax cuts were the answer to economic recovery and would create new jobs once again. It was Ronald Reagan's old "trickle-down economics" argument, brought out of the closet, dusted off once more, prepared for public consumption—but larger than ever before. Even a trickle of that, a worker might argue, could produce significant improvements in jobs or wages. And that's not counting some share of the tax cut as well. But let's look at these two—tax cuts and jobs—and how workers fared under George W. Bush the past three years.

To begin with, 84 percent of all taxpayers have incomes below \$75,000. That's the American working class, the largest part of which earn between \$40,000 and \$50,000, and many more earn less than that. The tax cut in 2003 for the vast majority of workers in the \$40-\$50,000 range amounted only to \$380, and for those in the \$50-\$75,000 range, only \$553.

In both cases that's less than one percent of their annual income. In fact, with Bush's tax cuts half of all income tax payers had their taxes cut by less than \$100. On the other hand, those with annual incomes of more than \$1 million received an average tax cut of \$105,636 from Bush. That's closer to 10 percent of their annual income. So much for the benefits for workers from the tax cut. Let's look at jobs.

SLEIGHT OF HAND: THE JOBLESS RECOVERY

In early 2001 the President's Council of Economic Advisors (CEA) announced that if the first round of Bush's \$2.1 trillion tax cuts for the rich were passed quickly, it would result in the creation of 800,000 additional jobs by the end of 2002, all due to the tax cut alone.

And, once again, in February 2003 the President's CEA assured that the adoption of a second round of Bush tax cuts would create 1.4 million additional jobs—510,000 in 2003 and another 891,000 for 2004—all solely attributable to the tax cuts.

All total, that amounts to a Bush promise of 2.2 million jobs created between 2001 and 2004 as a direct consequence of passage of the \$2.1 trillion tax cuts for the rich.

But three large dollops of hand-outs for the rich have not stemmed the destruction of jobs. Bush's primary plan for job creation—tax cuts—has proved a dismal failure.

On the other hand, facts have never deterred George W. True to his "stay the course" mentality, even when faced with stark reality of 3 million lost jobs, he today continues to propose further tax cuts for the rich.

After promising in August 2003 to ask for no additional cuts, Bush has once again gone back to the trough in early 2004 and requested in his latest



budget yet another big cut for his wealthy friends—this time a \$1.8 trillion permanent cut in taxes for the wealthy over the next 10 years.

The long-held consensus among economists is that the U.S. economy needs to add a minimum of 150,000 to 200,000 new jobs each month just to absorb those entering the work force and keep total joblessness from rising. During the non-recession years of 1993-1999 the average monthly gain in jobs was 250,000. And economists agree that by spring 2004, at this stage of a recovery from the 2001 Bush recession, monthly job creation should be at least at that level.

During 2003 the U.S. economy needed to produce 150,000 jobs a month, or 1.8 million jobs for the period, just to stay even. Instead, it actually lost 360,000. That's in addition to the 1.8 million new workers entering the economy, for a total shortfall of more than 180,000 jobs a month.

THE LAST SIX MONTHS: THE DISAPPEARING JOBS TRICK

The grand predictions and assurances from Bush and his spokespersons about jobs have been no more accurate in the last six months than they were in 2003 or during the last three years. Since Bush's trumpeting last October of the 8.2 percent surge in economic growth and promise of massive job creation, jobs have been created at a rate of around only 61,000 a month on average. That's about 90,000 a month short of the 150,000 minimum jobs needed every month just to absorb new workers entering the labor force. Even the brief surge in jobs that accompanied the 8.2 percent growth rate never came close, in the best months of job creation last October-November, to reaching the 150,000 minimum per month needed for net job creation. And after that brief period last fall, job growth has been down hill once again.

If the government committed just 20 percent (\$440 billion) of the \$2.1 trillion tax cuts directly to job creation, it would produce a total of nearly 9 million new jobs, each paying \$50,000 a year. The 8.2 million unemployed would be eliminated.

The wealthy in America with incomes over \$147,000 a year have been receiving their 80 percent share of the \$2.1 trillion tax cut pie. But the American worker is yet to see the promised jobs.

IMPACT ON WAGES AND PROFITS

While Bush's tax-cuts-for-the-rich solution has failed to produce jobs, it has succeeded in reducing wages. For the year 2003 aggregate wage and salary income has fallen by 0.7 percent. Bush's cut-taxes-for-the-rich program has proved, for workers at least, to be the equivalent of economic snake oil. But for the owning class, the employers, it's been more like manna from heaven.

From 2001 through 2003 a total of 58.6 million workers in the U.S. were laid off at some point and about 55 million rehired or were newly hired somewhere. Jobs that were created in the last three years were often not of the same quality as those that disappeared. In addition to lower pay and benefits, they were often temporary, part-time, contract-basis jobs. Various studies show those laid off during this period, and then rehired, went to new jobs that typically paid 30-35 percent less in wages and benefits. A similar study by the Economic Policy Institute in Washington D.C. estimated new hires were earning an average of \$14.65 an hour, whereas lost jobs were paying \$16.92. The differential is even greater when medical and other benefits are added.

And companies are clearly pocketing the difference. According to recent government data, corporate profits were up by 30 percent in the July-September 2003 period compared to the same period in 2002—the largest year-over-year growth in profits in 19 years and reaching an annual rate of more than \$1 trillion dollars for the first time in history. Forecasts are for another 15 percent gain in profits in 2004. That's a 45 percent raise in just two years.

A lion's share of the above profits surge accrued to those companies in the U.S. aggressively engaging in moving American jobs offshore. For example, TV business news commen-

tator Lou Dobbs recently compiled a list of 216 companies moving jobs overseas, called the "Dobbs Rogue Fund." Others have calculated that "these 216 companies registered a remarkable 72 percent return (i.e. profit gain) over the last 12 months."

TRUE JOB LOSS AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Officially, the number of unemployed during the current Bush recession and jobless recovery that has followed has remained at any given time chronically at around 8-9 million. This does not count the so-called "discouraged workers" leaving the workforce in hundreds of thousands every month, those 5 million employed involuntarily part-time, those involuntarily forced into retirement or those who have no jobs but claim when interviewed to be employed as "consultants" earning an occasional dollar here or there "under the table."

This alternative, more accurate measure of the unemployed is sometimes called the "labor underutilization rate." This rate adds about another 2.8 million unemployed for those discouraged. When the discouraged workers, the jobless who want work but drop out of the work force, are added to the official number of those out of work, the unemployment rate in the U.S. is generally around 10 percent, instead of the current official 5-6 percent.

And even this 10 percent of officially unemployed and discouraged doesn't count those involuntarily employed part time, or forced into retirement, or "consultants" not really working full time by any measurement. The figure for these latter groups would add another 3 million equivalent full time unemployed to the ranks of the jobless at minimum, and another 3-4 percent to the official unemployment rate.

All total that brings the number of those out of work to more than 15 million, and the true unemployment rate to around 13-14 percent in the U.S. as of early 2004.

HISTORICAL PARALLELS

George W. Bush may be the familial offspring of George H. W. Bush, but he is more so the economic policy descendant of Ronald Reagan. George W.'s \$2.1 trillion tax cut for the rich is a direct inheritor of Reagan's similarly targeted tax cuts of \$758 billion for the wealthy enacted in the early 1980s.

At that time the \$758 billion was a record give away. Just like George W., Reagan's term was also marked by a more than doubling of defense spending. Similarly, Reagan's record defense spending and tax cuts resulted in the then-record budget deficits of the 1980s that were used as a hammer by Republicans at the time to attack and cut social spending programs.

Even the element of corporate scandals under George W. Bush was first experienced under Reagan. Today it is almost forgotten how Reagan tax-and-deregulation policies encouraged and facilitated the massive Savings & Loan scandal that eventually cost the American taxpayers a trillion dollars to clean up.

In a Feb. 19, 2004 speech on the economy Bush arrogantly declared, "We've been through a lot. But we acted here in Washington. I led."

Yes, like the Pied Piper of Hamelin led, playing the same tax tune on his jobs flute all the way...right over the cliff!

Jack Rasmus is the chair of the San Francisco Bay Area local chapter 3 of the National Writers Union, UAW 1981, AFL-CIO, and a long-time member of the Dramatists Guild. Rasmus has a Ph.D. in Political Economy.

Union continues the fight for worker safety

by Tom Price

If President Bush has his way there could be something else to mourn this Workers Memorial Day on April 28—the beginning of the end of federal safety enforcement. Since assuming office in 2001, the Bush regime has repeatedly attacked the enforcement powers of the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA), and there might be more to come.

OSHA cutbacks are life-threatening for the 91.5 percent of private sector American workers without union contracts. The 8.5 percent who are in unions can bargain for safety and enforce contracts, but that can be an uphill fight. A case in point—as one of his first acts in office, Bush scrapped the ergonomic safety standards. That presented problems the longshore Coast Safety Committee now has to negotiate with the Pacific Maritime Assn. (PMA).

“We have ergonomic issues the Bush administration shot down,” committee member and walking boss Local 94 Secretary-Treasurer Danny Miranda said. “This affects clerks, heavy equipment operators, maintenance and repair mechanics and top handlers. These jobs often affect necks and backs, and Bush has eliminated OSHA protection on this issue.”

In the first 30 years since its founding in 1970, OSHA saved as many as 220,000 workers’ lives by enforcing safety standards, according to the AFL-CIO’s Safety and Health Director Peg Seminario. It also lowered workplace injuries by 39 percent. Those results inspired the AFL-CIO in 1989 to choose OSHA’s birthday, April 28, as Workers Memorial Day. Canada and nearly 100 other countries also remember killed or injured workers on that day.

As well as mourning the dead, unions have to fight for the living. Rebuilding OSHA could become a vital interest for the ILWU if the employers have their way.

“At the last negotiations PMA showed up at the table with as many resolutions on safety as we had, and most of them were to delete language already in the safety code,” Safety Committee Chair and longshore Local 13 member Mike Freese said. “At first they wanted to eliminate the code altogether and just go by OSHA rules. We wouldn’t agree to that.”

Bush’s attack on OSHA began March 21, 2001, when he signed legislation killing OSHA standards on repetitive stress injuries. The rollback pleased corporate lobbyists such as the

National Association of Manufacturers and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. They had fought those regulations for more than 10 years and contributed heavily to Republican candidates in the 2000 election. Administration critics saw Bush’s action as a payback to corporate interests. They would certainly profit if Bush passed the annual \$40 billion injury costs from corporations to workers and taxpayers.

One week later Bush’s Labor Secretary Elaine Chao axed a \$4.8 million safety-training program. Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) fired off a protest letter to the secretary.

“In rescinding the grants, the Dept. of Labor [DoL] cited ‘budgetary circumstances’ as the cause,” Pelosi wrote on March 30. “Sadly, workplace safety will suffer to once again fund tax breaks for the wealthy.”

Bush’s April 2001 appointment of Eugene Scalia as the DoL’s Solicitor or chief attorney raised such howls of protest from Democrats that he withdrew the appointment during hearings. Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-MA) voiced opposition to Scalia’s published opinions that repetitive stress injuries were “psychological” in nature, and questioned Scalia’s fitness for the job.

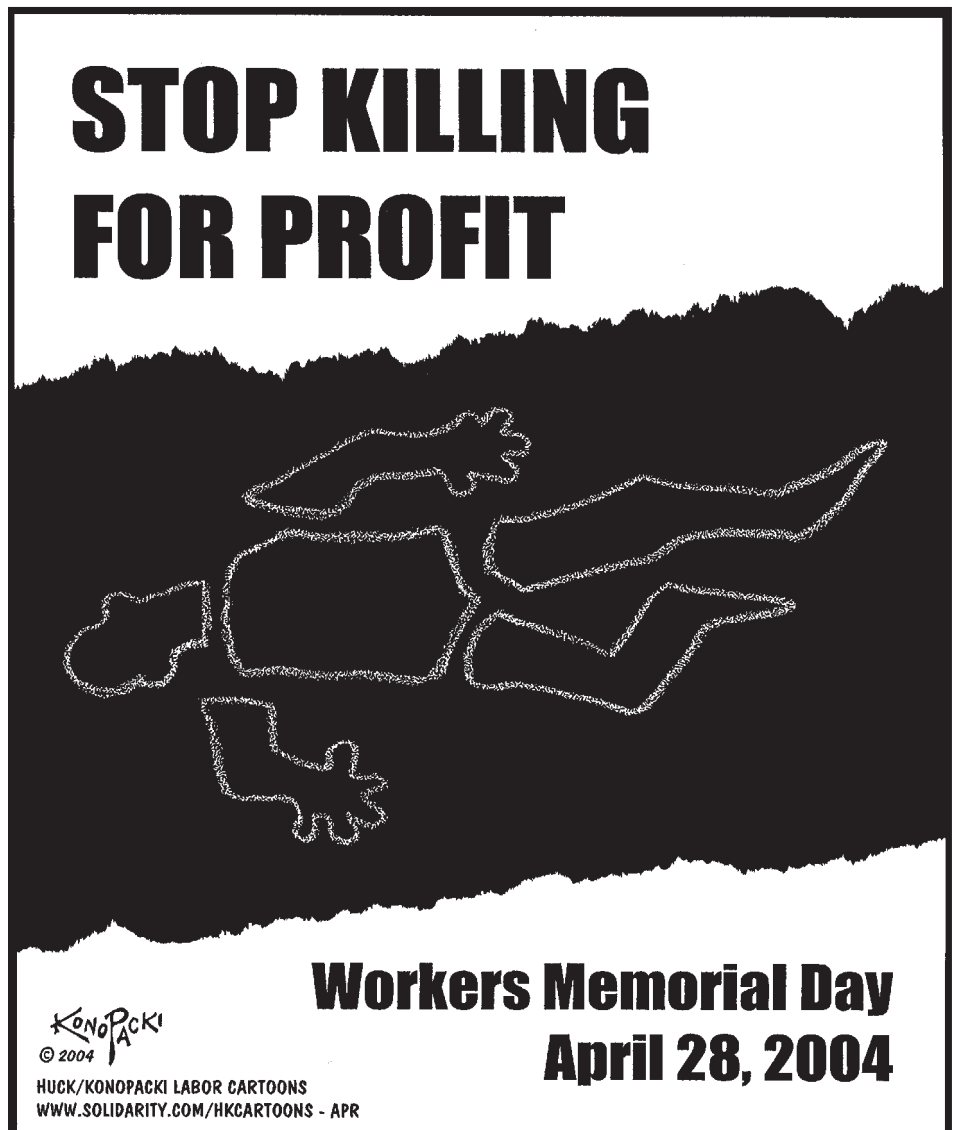
“Since most labor laws do not include a private right of action [the right to sue], the Solicitor serves as the workers’ lawyer by using his discretion and judgment to decide whether to enforce workers’ rights,” Kennedy said at the October 2001 hearing in arguing that Scalia was the wrong man for the job.

Bush waited until Congress was out of session and appointed Scalia during its recess on Jan. 11, 2002. That way a lawyer who had represented clients like UPS against OSHA standards could become the chief legal officer in charge of enforcing those very standards. The appointment lasted one year.

Since then the Coast Safety Committee has drawn the line on workplace hazards and is negotiating with PMA and OSHA to ensure dock-er safety.

“On the issue of speed limits, they refuse to put speedometers on yard trucks so we can know their speed,” Miranda said. The employer also refused to post speed limits on the docks.

PMA did agree to conduct a study on dockside diesel emissions. There has been no progress on emissions of another sort—container loads of animal hides that leak a nasty, fetid liquid on dockers. The Safety Committee is also trying to eliminate hexavalent chromium in paint. It becomes a toxic



vapor when containers or cranes are heated with cutting torches.

The union fought to get dockside first aid for heart attack victims during the last negotiations. Now the employer has agreed to install Automatic External Defibrillators at some ports, most recently during grain negotiations for the 2003-2006 contract. Defibrillators often save lives by sending an electrical charge through the heart, restoring its proper heartbeat.

The committee will vigorously oppose vertical tandem lifts. This practice requires a crane operator to lift two containers at once.

The union raised these and other issues at the Marine Advisory Committee on Occupational Safety and Health in early March. That committee, representing government, industry and labor, advises OSHA on dock and shipyard safety issues. One issue the union brought to MACOSH was the practice of “riding the beam,” that is, riding in a cage on a crane’s spreader bar onto or off a ship. Workers wear full safety harnesses, but have no place to fasten a tether to the beam.

“We want the crane to work at a slow motion while carrying people, an emergency stop button and tie points on the beam so we can attach safety lines directly to it,” Freese said. “They did agree we should have anchor points on the beam to connect our safety lines to. This doesn’t make it a rule, but it would be a recommendation to OSHA.”

MACOSH wouldn’t agree to place emergency stop buttons in the cages, nor would the employers agree to slow down the crane movement while people are in the cages.

Unlike the employers or the government, the safety committee sees these issues from the workers’ perspective, from the bottom of the hold to the cab of the crane. When accidents happen, it’s workers who pay and workers and families who mourn them on Workers Memorial Day.

“We have been lobbying hard for the container chassis safety inspections,” Miranda said. “Recently a container separated from a chassis on an overpass and fell onto a truck below, killing the driver in that truck instantly.”

Labor scholars say unions can win with women

By Mark Gruenberg
PAI Staff Writer

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The nation’s unions must change their organizing methods and tactics to take advantage of their higher success rates among women workers, two prominent labor scholars say.

Speaking at a Feb. 6 forum at the AFL-CIO, Princeton historian Dorothy Cobble and Cornell labor studies professor Kate Bronfenbrenner pointed out that strategies that worked to organize female workers in the 1930s and 1940s still work today. Organizing drives are more successful among women workers than among their male counterparts, they added, but unions fail to take advantage of this.

“No union in America makes its priority the targeting of private-sector female clerical workers,” Bronfenbrenner said.

Unions don’t target female workers even though “women are one of the few bright spots in the labor movement,” said Bronfenbrenner, a profes-

sor at Cornell’s School of Industrial and Labor Relations. “We have a constant increase in proportions of union members who are women and soon women will be a majority of union members.”

Women already hold a majority in unions such as the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). Yet most union organizing campaigns, reflecting the long male dominance of union hierarchies, are geared towards organizing men in male-dominated professions, and a higher proportion of them fail, Bronfenbrenner added.

To change that imbalance in organizing, Bronfenbrenner said unions must use different tactics and emphasize different issues. Winning unions—and those who are organizing female workers—share several approaches, she said. These unions:

- Hire and train organizers who are a match for the unit being targeted.
- Use community pressure to

leverage the employer inside and outside the workplace and emphasize personal one-on-one contact in both the workplace and the community.

- Build and empower rank-and-file leadership committees with an ownership role in organizing drives.

- Focus on issues that resonate with the workers, not necessarily pay, but respect on the job, job security and issues such as work rules and flexible hours. Many successful unions start planning for bargaining and setting bargaining goals even before winning the organizing drive.

- Become tough on themselves, using benchmarks to determine whether they should continue a campaign or cut their losses.

“We have to make organizing campaigns more aggressive and global, and we have to have organizing committees that are more representative by race and gender,” Bronfenbrenner said. “Unions will fail if they only see women workers as a pressure group to be accommodated.”

Public opinion also contributed to the organizing wins of the 1930s and 1940s, Cobble said.

“The powerful message then was that if the labor movement was strong, so the entire country would be strong,” Cobble said. People viewed labor as “representing the social good.” That message has since been buried under anti-labor laws and business lobbying.

Female union membership rose from 800,000 at the beginning of the 1930s to 3 million by the end of the 1940s, and there were successful, large, female-led strikes, she noted.

These included a nationwide strike in 1947 by 230,000 female telephone operators—members of what became the Communications Workers of America (CWA)—and strikes by the United Electrical Workers (UE) and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW). UE shut down 78 General Electric and Westinghouse plants in 1946 by demanding equal pay for equal work, Cobble noted.

The 'Old Left' and the union: Keith

Introduction by Harvey Schwartz

This is the first of a new series featuring ILWU veterans of the "Old Left" who were once active in the American Communist Party (CP). Much has been said and written about the many trials of Harry Bridges, who was accused repeatedly by government officials of being a CP member. Nothing was ever proved, of course, and Bridges was left alone in 1955 after 20 years of near-constant hounding.

On the other hand, little has been published about those ILWU veterans who were CP members, their Party-sponsored activities in the ILWU or their sincere dedication to the union's cause. The present series addresses these oversights.

Keith Eickman retired as warehouse Local 6 President in 1982 after 25 years as a full-time union official. He is the focus of this month's article. Eickman shared the youthful idealism as well as the eventual disappointment experienced by many people who were members of the CP between the 1930s and the 1950s. His testimony, laced with self-reflection and humor, portrays the Party's role in some pivotal events in Local 6 history.

Eickman's life-long dedication to social justice and to the ILWU has been extraordinary. When he celebrated his 90th birthday in late 2003 he could look back on 60 years of service to the Warehouse Division. He is still president of the West Bay Local 6 Pensioners Club.

The article below is based on an interview I conducted with Eickman in San Francisco during 1981, when he was still Local 6 President. That tape session was part of the ILWU's initial oral history project funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and co-sponsored by the University of California, Berkeley. Finally, thanks to Oscar Berland, Glenna Matthews and Nancy Quam-Wickham for their help.

KEITH EICKMAN

Edited by Harvey Schwartz,
Curator, ILWU Oral History Collection

I was born in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada in October 1913. My parents got divorced, and I usually stayed with my mother, but in 1930 I came to San Francisco to live with my father. I've been here most of my life since then. I went to Mission High School in the City my last two years and graduated in 1932, right in the middle of the Great Depression. Millions of people were unemployed. My father worked for the Pacific Gas and Electric Company. He never lost his job, but his pay was reduced. It took me two years to get work myself. I finally got a job in 1934 running a Burroughs bookkeeping machine at the Rosenberg Dried Fruit Company in Santa Clara, California.

With so many people out of work I was convinced there was something wrong with the system. I was looking for something that would give me answers to the problems of society and life. Then I met these young people at a night school in San Jose. They were members of the Young Communist League (YCL) in Santa Clara County. The YCL was the junior section of the American Communist Party (CP). I recall being impressed with the YCL slogan, "Life with a purpose."

I joined the YCL in January 1936 and became quite active. There were some romantic tendencies about the YCL. I was joining an organization that was against the capitalist system. The Communists wanted to replace capitalism with socialism, which promised to divide the wealth of society more fairly.

We were really the most sectarian group in the world. We sang revolutionary songs, like [singing] "Fly higher and higher and higher, our symbol is the Soviet Star." This I thought was marvelous—I liked the songs, I liked to sing and I liked the people. Our attitude toward the U.S. was contemptuous, even toward the good things about it. We were

sectarian in that sense.

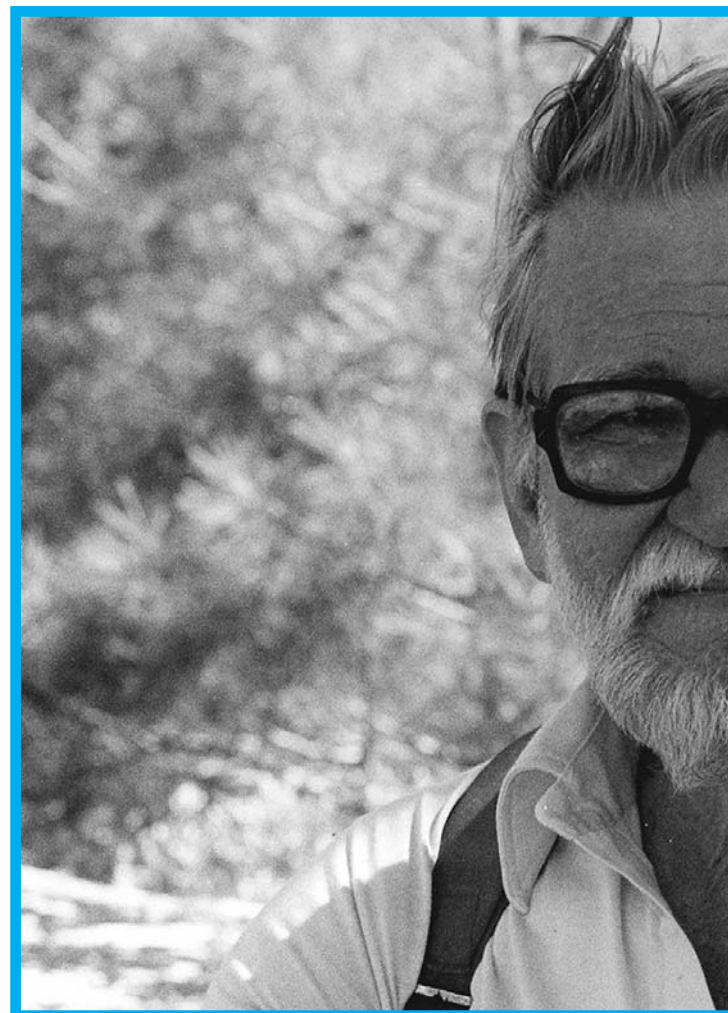
Through YCL I got involved with the organization of Santa Clara County's cannery workers. Then a drive started to organize the dried fruit workers in the Rosenberg plant into the militant new United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA), CIO. UCA-PAWA was set up by the CIO in 1937. This was when the AFL and the CIO were split and were fierce competitors.

As an office clerk at Rosenberg I was not a member of the plant bargaining unit. Still, armed with the virtue of my beliefs, I announced to everyone in the plant that the production workers should join the CIO rather than stay in the conservative AFL affiliate that then represented them. This was not received by the employer with great enthusiasm.

The workers in the plant weren't in a position to support me. But I was young and brash and thought I possessed the wisdom of the world. I was going to pass on all of my information to these lucky people. Well, they did not join the CIO, but remained in the AFL. Subsequently they did become part of the ILWU-CIO in Santa Clara County, but that was a few years later.

Eventually Rosenberg laid me off. They said it was for lack of work. Unemployment insurance had just come in, so I ran out my unemployment. There were no jobs, but I wasn't looking for a job very strenuously because of the excitement of being active in the YCL. We did all kinds of things that seemed very important, like going to meetings every night.

Then I got hired under the New Deal's Works Progress Administration (WPA). I was given various WPA jobs around San Jose. Some were pretty stupid, but they did give you enough to live on and you could survive. Once I worked in the Stanford University labs counting fish scales. Apparently this determined some factors about the fish, but I can't remember what.



Keith Eickman

I quit one WPA job to attend the 1939 American Youth Congress (AYC) in New York. The YCL in Santa Clara had formed a local Youth Council and I became the secretary and a delegate to the AYC. The AYC was not a revolutionary organization. It was just trying to improve conditions for young people so they could go to school and get jobs. It had a certain amount of influence in the United States until World War II. Attending the AYC meeting, I think, shows how I always did work of a broader nature than just being a member of the YCL.

That is, I always tried to work with other people. I wanted social betterment for its own sake, but also I had the idea that by doing this we really were developing some concept of the revolution. I thought the revolution was just around the corner. I remember a friend who said, "You know what? The revolution is going to be within two weeks." We were very young at the time. But I was always very cautious in my analysis. I said, "I don't think so, I think it will take five years." So I gave what you'd consider the very conservative estimate! He was the real radical. Well, the revolution didn't happen in two weeks, and it didn't happen in five years, either.

Although I was rather naive in my mid-20s, I did have certain questions. In 1939 the Nazi-Soviet Pact caused me some anguish. That was when the Russian Communists signed a non-aggression treaty with Germany that allowed Hitler to start World War II without fear of Soviet interference. But I was able to overcome my anguish because I believed that the Soviet Union knew best. That is what I was told by the CP. I'd gone to confession and received the answer I wanted to hear.

In 1940 I went to work for Westinghouse in San Francisco as a Burroughs operator. But I really didn't like office work. In August 1941 I decided to get into the warehouse industry, where they were hiring. The United States wasn't in World War II yet, but the work situation was improving because of increased defense spending. In the building where I was employed there were some Local 6 members.

They were making more money than I was as a Burroughs operator. I thought, "This is ridiculous." I quit my job, went down to the hiring hall on Clay Street and got on at Zellerbach Paper company.

In those days the warehouse industry was not mechanized at all. Zellerbach had enormous cartons of paper, 36 by 42 inches, and they weighed an awful lot. Everything had to be



Local 6 pickets during the long 1949 San Francisco warehouse strike.

ILWU ORAL HISTORY
Volume I

The 'Old Left' and
Keith Eickman
warehouse

th Eickman of warehouse Local 6



stacked on the floor, but there were no mechanical contrivances to lift those cartons up. So you'd build a pyramid. You'd start at the bottom and lay it over until you got to the top. The only way you had of moving anything around was to use a little four-wheeler. There were no forklifts or electrical devices of any kind.

When I went to work at Zellerbach, they put me with one of these old Italians who was built like a moose. Local 6 had a lot of Italian workers then. This man was very strong and I wasn't. I got on one end of this cart and he got on the other. The next thing I knew I was flying with the carton. So they put me on something I could do. It was all heavy stuff, but it wasn't this 150 to 200 pounds.

I became active in Local 6 immediately. Joe Orlando was the steward, but the job didn't mean that much to him. Of course, I was just panting to be steward. Joe could see it. It wasn't any big political or personal issue with him. In 1942 he just said, "Why don't you be steward?" Everyone else agreed. So I became the steward and I practically reached glory. I was elected secretary of the Local 6 stewards' council in 1943, but the war cut that career short. One month later I was drafted. I served in England, France, Belgium and Germany in an Army railway battalion. In June 1946 I got discharged.

Shortly after the war I became a member of the regular CP. When I got out of the Army, the union sent me to the California Labor School (CLS). The CLS was an institution in San Francisco which was close to the Party. It had a trade union program. I got something out of the classes and then went back to work at Zellerbach as the steward.

A number of the leaders of Local 6 were also members of the CP. Normally there wasn't any basic disagreement over what the Party and the union members wanted, but the Wallace presidential campaign of 1948 was different. Henry Wallace had been vice-president under Franklin Roosevelt. Now he was running as a third-party candidate on the Progressive Party ticket with Communist support. This was the election where Harry Truman, the Democratic president, beat Thomas Dewey, the heavily favored Republican. Wallace called for peace with the Soviet Union instead of a Cold War.

In Local 6 we passed a resolution in support of Wallace. It was not accepted wholeheartedly, but it was done. I was gung-ho for supporting Wallace myself because I thought the American

people wanted a third party. Only afterwards did I realize that although there were lots of people at Wallace rallies in Northern California, in respect to the whole population, there weren't that many. When the actual vote came and Wallace did poorly, I was enormously surprised.

As the steward at Zellerbach I used to bug people an awful lot about Wallace. The day before the election I went around to everyone in the plant and said, "Tomorrow you're all going to go out and vote for Wallace." A bunch of workers were sitting there. I guess by then they were fed up with my enthusiasm and my insistence that I knew what they were going to do. One of the old Italian men said, "You're going to vote for Wallace. We're going to vote for Truman." I said, "But Local 6 has endorsed Wallace and you're obligated to support the position of the local." He said, "Fuck the local and fuck Wallace. We're going to vote for Truman. Don't bother us anymore."

I've had a lot of lessons in my life, but that was one of the most devastating things that ever happened to me. I really thought all the people in that plant were going to vote for Wallace because I wanted to believe it. After that I began to examine everything I was doing in regard to political issues and my relationship with people. I think I really began to grow up from that time onward.

In 1949 we had our famous warehouse strike in San Francisco that lasted over 100 days. By then I had been elected chairman of the stewards' council. During the strike I was secretary of the strike committee. Those of us who were in the CP made some mistakes in that strike. One of them is that we made the *People's World* (PW), the CP newspaper, the official organ of the union.

This was a mistake because the majority of the members of the union didn't read the PW and didn't want to read the PW. I know because I used to sell the PW, and the number of papers you could sell at meetings was very, very small. We brought the PW around on the picket lines, too. The members would throw them in the garbage can. They didn't want the strike to have some political aspect to it.

There was a certain amount of antagonism among some of the members of the union over the PW. That, plus the endorsement of Wallace, laid the basis for a group that was organizing for the Teamsters union to try to take over Local 6. Three or four Local 6 business agents in the West Bay (San Francisco) went over to the Teamsters and set up this rival Teamsters Local 12. This was close to when the CIO purged the ILWU, too, and another little group emerged in Local 6 that wanted a CIO takeover.

We did lose some members to the Teamsters, but the primary problem was that there was constant fighting within the local. It was like a civil war. After the Korean War started in 1950, some people would whip up hysteria and anti-communist sentiment at meetings. When anyone who was considered a Communist got up to speak, they would chant, "Communist! Communist! Communist!" The local

was being torn apart. It survived, but after this the role of the CP within the union disintegrated, or at least diminished. The CP just didn't have the same influence within the local anymore.

I stayed in the CP until I was expelled in 1955 on the grounds of "white chauvinism." At the very time that Joe McCarthy was carrying on outside the Party, there was a tremendous purge within the CP. They purged anyone who said anything that could possibly be considered the slightest bit questionable. It became a hysteria within the CP I had an argument on the floor of the stewards' council with a Black Local 6 leader who is still one of my friends. The motion we were considering was not that important, but the Party leaders felt this was an example of white chauvinism and they expelled me.

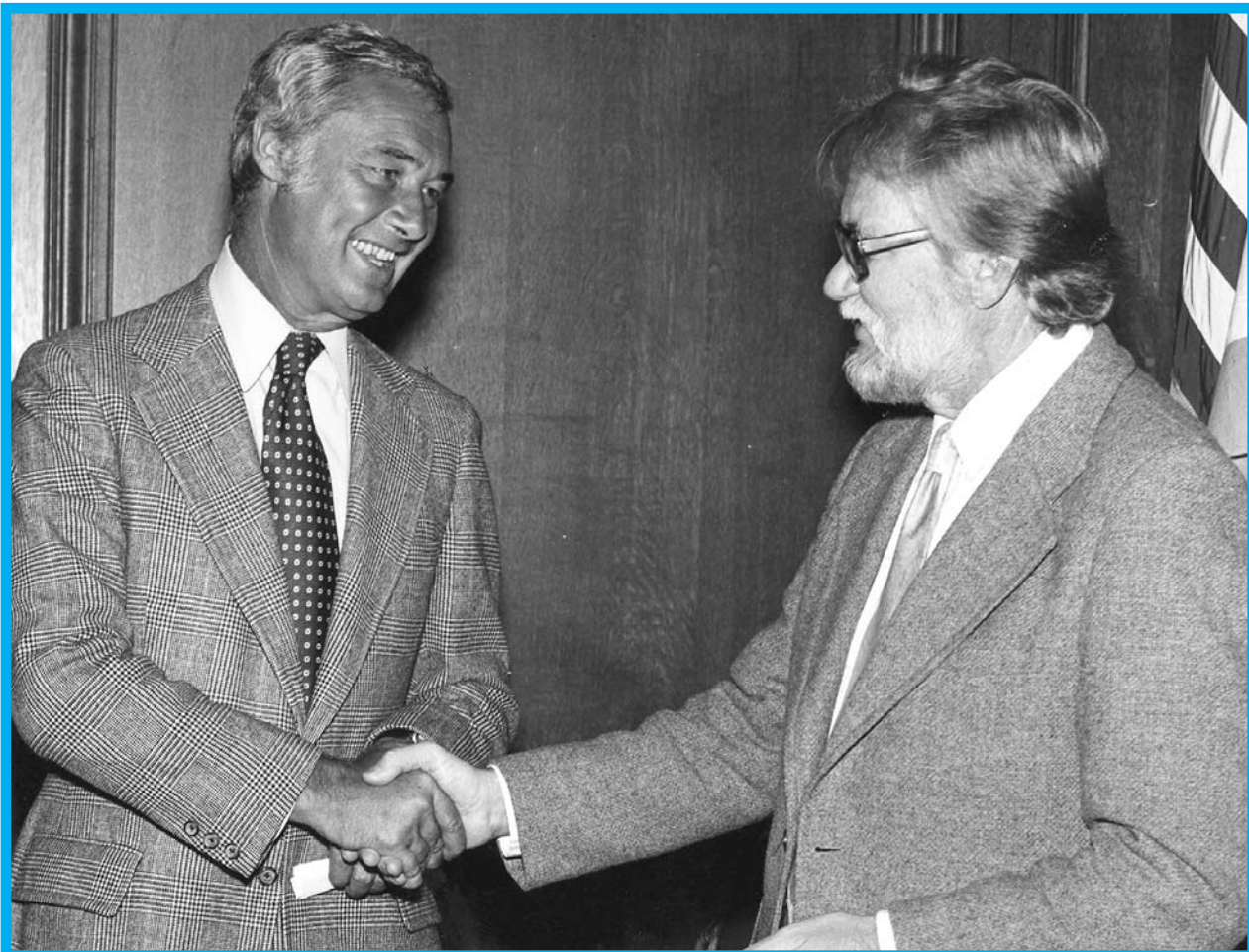
They probably did me a favor. I am extraordinarily devoted to concepts and organizations. It would have been difficult for me to voluntarily separate myself from the CP because of my history within it, my background and the people I knew, even after Nikita Khrushchev's revelations of "the crimes of the Stalin era" in 1956. But they took the decision out of my hands.

Local 6's opposition to the Teamsters continued into the mid-1950s. This was not doing us any good. We were spending too much blasting the Teamsters, and they were blasting us. You don't really build an organization on negative action like that. Then Louis Goldblatt, the ILWU International secretary-treasurer, started the concept of the Teamsters and the ILWU working together in Northern California warehouse negotiations. This was a wise and sensible decision that helped both of us from the latter 1950s onward.

In the mid-1950s I remained very active in the stewards' council and on negotiating committees. I ran for business agent in late 1957, won a close race and ended up serving from 1958 to 1970. Those years included a lot of the Vietnam War, which the union opposed. At the same time we supported the battle for integration. I was never the big hero, but I played my part in those activities.

I became Local 6 secretary-treasurer in 1970 and was unopposed for re-election three times. But when I ran for president in 1977 the CP put every effort they possibly could into backing their own candidate against me. Evidently it was important to the Party to have enough influence to gain the presidency of Local 6. Yet I got 51 percent of the vote and won against three other candidates.

Understand that I don't want to indicate in any way that I regret my period in the CP. It had an important impact on my life. The Party gave me an understanding of the class relationship of society. It gave me a political attitude that made me different from any of the officers in the union who didn't have that background. I don't think they understood politics to the same degree. I would not want to belong to the CP now because I don't want to belong to an organization in which the decisions are all made from above. Still, my life in the Party laid the basis for whatever role I played in Local 6.



San Francisco Mayor George Moscone appointed Eickman to the city's Parks Commission in 1977.

TORY PROJECT
X, Part I

and the union:
Eickman of
Local 6

The daughters of Tugboat Annie

Story and Photos by Maria Brooks

Working men look to John Henry and Paul Bunyan and a list of other heroes. But what about working women? Who mirrors their lives in American lore?

One stands out. She goes by the name of Tugboat Annie.

Annie is an industrial worker, a working stiff, and for the most part she is alone in the world. No other blue-collar heroine has endured as long in popular culture as this bosomy mariner of the Puget Sound.

Tugboat Annie Brennan worked as senior captain of a deep sea tug and towing operation in a mythical town that resembled Tacoma. She was a big lady, built like a fire plug. When she darted from tug to pier, buildings quaked and pilings quivered. Her ample girth was maintained by a diet of pork chops, mash potatoes and pancakes.

The public met this unconventional woman in 1931 in the pages of *The Saturday Evening Post*. Tugboat Annie was created by writer Norman Reilly Raine, who sailed in his youth as an ordinary seaman. Annie's heroics are described in 75 stories spanning 30 years. Hollywood made movies about her and Ronald Reagan starred in one of them. In the 1950s Tugboat Annie re-surfaced in a television sitcom. Defying all feminine stereotypes, Annie touched America's heart. And like a cork in the water, she refused to go away.

"The preconception of tugboat workers," says Captain Jean Pinto, "is we're all big and we waddle. The public expects to see people with thick arms, fat and tattooed."

Pinto, a tugboat operator on San Francisco Bay for 18 years, looks trim and shapely.

If the public has a stereotype of tugboat workers, chances are it came from the pages of *The Saturday Evening Post* a long time ago. Raine would eventually earn an Academy Award for screenwriting. But when Tugboat Annie dropped into his imagination, he worked as a journeyman writer of short stories. Back then the public read books and magazines for



Tugboat Annie's toughness on the seas captured the imagination of *The Saturday Evening Post* readers.

fun. Radio was still a weird idea and television didn't exist. In its heyday *The Saturday Evening Post* was the most popular magazine in America. When Tugboat Annie jumped out of its pages, the reader met a woman pumped up and full of herself.

"She cops an attitude because she's really good at what she does," says Pinto after skimming a Tugboat Annie story in the galley.

Annie's got plenty of attitude. Tangling with her can be risky business. She's brazen and smart and reads maritime law. She's a seasoned sailor on the Puget Sound, with 40 years of experience under her belt. No one knows the job better.

In the late 1920s Raine moved to Tacoma, Washington. He was living there when Thea Foss died. The town

honored this private woman with the largest funeral ever seen. Foss was the matriarch of the tug and barge company that bears her name. With her husband Andrew she raised three sons. It was from conversations with her sons that Raine developed the concept for "Tugboat Annie."

In real life Thea Foss was very different from Annie. A motherly Norwegian, Foss was a sharp business woman and a good cook. But the Foss sons gave Raine story ideas, describing their tugboat operations around the Puget Sound. Raine used their anecdotes in his story lines. He credited Thea Foss as the model for Tugboat Annie. But in actuality, Annie's character sprang fully formed from the writer's imagination. With his creation, Raine gave a nod to working women everywhere.

In the stories Tugboat Annie faces down all kinds of riff-raff. Some of these low-lives are shipowners. She outwits con-men and swindlers. She gets little help from her male cohorts. She must prove her smarts over and over again.

"Not much has changed in that regard," says Marina Secchitano, San Francisco Bay Regional Director of the Inlandboatmen's Union. "Annie works twice as hard as the guys. She's a super achiever, but even so, she's constantly suspect for being a woman."

Annie may be a master mariner, but there's one thing she's not. She's not a sexual being. Apparently the public could accept a woman as a skilled seafarer, but they drew the line on sex. She is sexually neutral, even undesirable. She "waddles." She's often compared to ungainly animals. We're told she looks like a hippopotamus or a "baffled" rhinoceros. She may beat men at their own game, but the price she pays is her womanliness.

At times Annie seems forlorn in this world of men. When she sprains an ankle and is laid up, her buddies stop by and ask, "How's your hoof, Annie?" Tugboat Annie moves through her life alone. When we first meet her, she's running at full throttle. She's 65 and a widow. Her crew and seamen, down on their luck, make up her family.

When Hollywood made its first "Tugboat Annie" movie, they fiddled with her character. Annie comes on screen with a husband and son. She

had morphed into a seagoing housewife. Apparently, Hollywood felt nervous that Tugboat Annie might be perceived as a lesbian. The film flopped.

"It's interesting as a woman, how you have to change your whole image, your public image, to get things done," says Melissa Parker, a tugboat owner and operator on San Francisco Bay. Women may change their image, but they rarely move into a man's world unnoticed.

"You feel everyone's watching you," remembers Pinto of her early days on the bay. "I didn't want to screw up because it would mean 'the Girl' screwed up."

Pinto worked her way up from deckhand to captain. On the bay surprisingly few women drive tugboats. Pinto, a union member represented by Masters, Mates and Pilots (MMP), is the only one who works steady.

"I don't see a lot of women doing this," she says. "The wages haven't kept up with the cost of living. You're on call 24 hours a day. Women who come out of maritime academies go right on to ships, not many come on to tugs."

There's not much glamour in driving tugs. Deckhands embrace the culture of the fo'c'sle. Tug captains often work their way up the "hawsepipe," shunning prestigious maritime academies. Pride comes from having learned your craft the hard way.

"I felt I had to prove myself," says Pinto. "The lines are really heavy. I could throw them up on the bits, like the other guys did. But they'd yell at me, 'You're not strong enough to work on deck!' So I'd lift weights. By working on deck, I got stronger. The moment I showed up on the boat, till I got off, I stayed busy. I felt I had to."

At 45 Jean Pinto shares little in common with her fictional counterpart, Tugboat Annie. As a young woman Pinto sailed in New England with her family. She was athletic and adventuresome. For a short time she attended a Quaker college. Dropping out of school, she moved to Brazil to study music. For a time she worked for Amnesty International, feeling a need to do something meaningful. Frustrated in her pursuit of music, she returned to the Bay Area to look for a job.

Pinto hoped to make a living on the water, but at that time women were invisible in maritime. She creat-



Captain Jean Pinto.

ed her own job. She started painting and repairing pleasure boats. While working, she watched the runty tugboats pushing and prodding around the bay.

"I wanted to do that," she says.

There was no welcoming mat for women. Companies resisted hiring them, unions offered little or no support.

"Without affirmative action it would have been difficult to get this job," Pinto says. "I'd have had no legal recourse if I had been denied access."

Women sued for the right to work. In Pinto's case she had an ally in her employer. Oscar Neimeth owned a family towing operation on San Francisco Bay. He had daughters.

"I saw that Jeannie really worked hard," he remembers. "Why not give her a chance?"

Feeling stymied is a theme in the lives of seafaring women. For Tugboat Annie it was no different. In every story, somebody trips her, tries to sabotage her best efforts. Often the adversary is the system itself.

Tugboat Annie was sidelined during WWII when Raine, working in Hollywood, didn't send stories to the magazine. At the end of the war Annie appeared again in *The Saturday Evening Post*. Her fans were anxious to know how she spent the war.

They meet up with her on the Puget Sound. Annie is outraged. She's been rebuffed by the Navy.

"I axed the Navy to take me," yells Tugboat Annie. "Me, who knows ships and the sea like the inside of me hat. 'Ye're a woman,' they says."

Later in the story, she discovers that women are being recruited into the WAVES, so she applies again. She's rejected again.

"'You're too old,' they says!" relates Annie disdainfully.

Operator Parker experienced a variation on Annie's lament. "They tell me, 'You're too young. You don't have the experience,'" she says from the deck of the tug, *Nokomis*.

"Some companies say they'd rather have guys of any age than hire a woman," Parker says. "This attitude is still out there, but it's not out in the open. It's still a fight to work."

Parker graduated from Maine Maritime Academy. She looks younger than her 30 years. Her long chestnut hair hangs in a pony tail.

"I love tinkering around the engine room," she says. "I enjoy working on boat engines, taking them apart, repairing them, trouble shooting."

She holds a third mate's license and is also a member of MMP. Her first jobs were on tankers. She noticed the tugs assisting the ships and fell in love. Tugboats became a passion.

Six months ago Parker gave birth to Mary Rose. Motherhood adds another dimension to the problems of a seafarer. The first snag is unemployment. When it became obvious that Parker was pregnant, she lost her operator's job. After Mary Rose was born, Parker's job prospects became more problematic. She's a single mother.

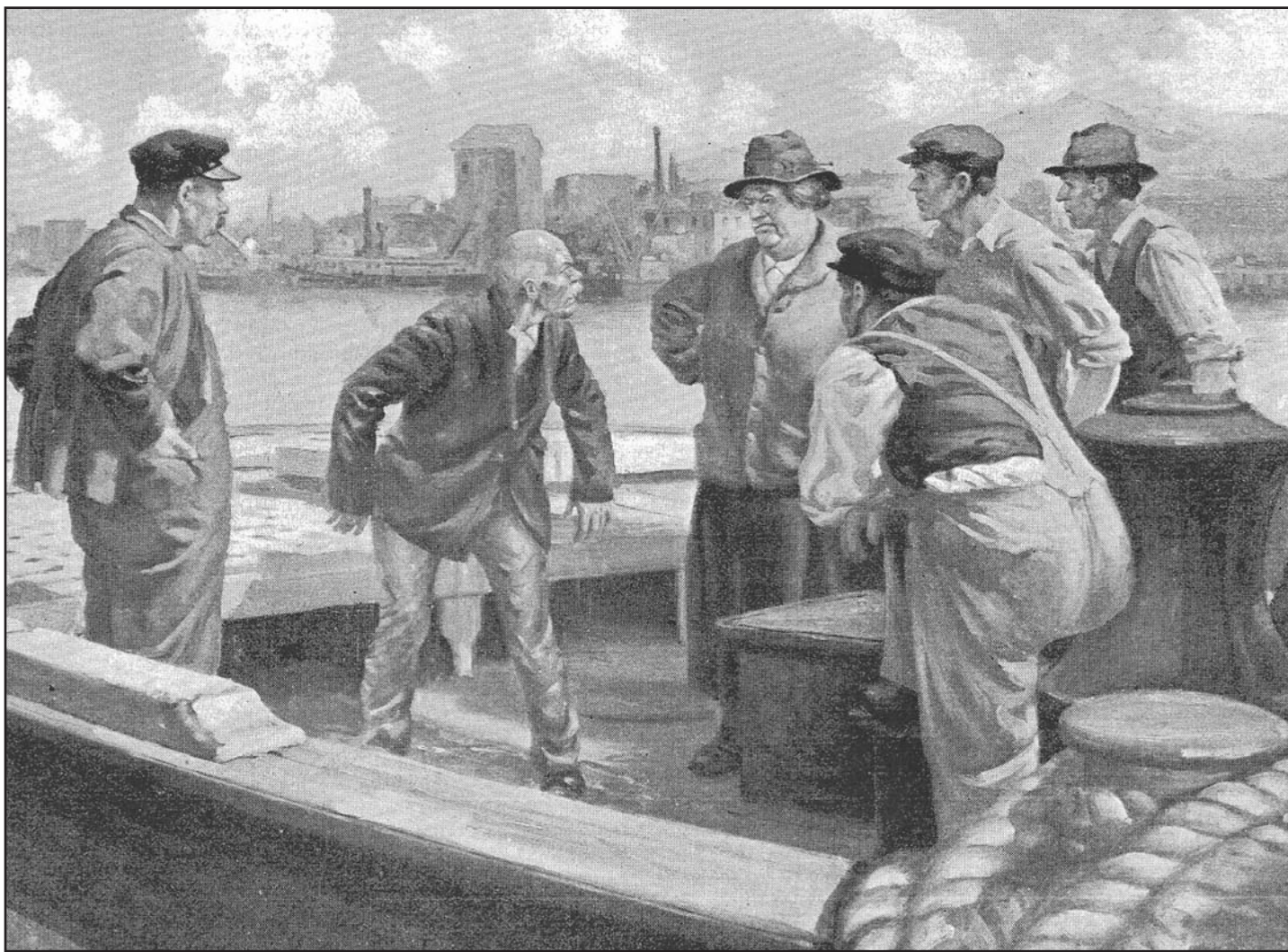
In the last couple of months Parker has put the baby in a basket and climbed into the wheel house.

"I've done a few jobs since she was born. One of them was 12 hours, the other 32," she says.

Parker is nursing Mary Rose, but when the baby grows older, she hopes to find child care, although it won't be easy.

"If I hire somebody to watch my daughter for six hours, and go to a job and find out I've got to work 12 or 32 hours more, I've got to inform my child care provider. 'Oh, it's not six hours you need to watch my daughter, it's 32,'" she says. "People don't put up with that."

Mary Rose has been toted on and off tugboats all her short life. She plays with toy tugboats in her bath and sleeps with a stuffed tugboat by her side. A good-natured baby, she



Men who tangled with Tugboat Annie soon learned they shouldn't.

seems delighted by the churning of diesel motors.

Before Mary Rose was born, Parker bought a WWII tugboat she plucked from the scrap heap. In its prime the old tug, *Nokomis* tried vainly to squelch the fires of Pearl Harbor after the attack. *Nokomis* had been neglected for years, left to rot in the mud flats in San Francisco. Parker bought her at auction for 50 bucks.

"I thought a piece of history like this needs to be preserved. It's too important to end up in the scrap pile," says Parker.

She believes the engines on *Nokomis* will fire up once more after a little tinkering.

"*Nokomis* has a diesel electric plant," she says. "I've worked on diesel tugs on the bay, but diesel electric is a completely new kind of plant to learn. It's cool!"

Mary Rose squeals in her carrier on deck as she eyes sea gulls. Nearby Parker inspects chipped paint in the galley. Not long after saving *Nokomis*, Parker heard of another WWII tug in distress. This one was named *Wenonah* and her engines actually work. Last week Parker and a group of supporters piloted the old tug from Newport Beach in Southern California up the Pacific Coast to berth her next to *Nokomis*.

"Once we've restored the *Nokomis* to her WWII state, we'll offer educational programs on her," she says.

Parker plans for her tugs to assist the historic Liberty and Victory ships in San Francisco Bay. She'll offer to carry ashes of fallen veterans to their burial at sea. Parker formed a non-profit organization to maintain her boats and calls it "The Historic Tugboat Education and Restoration Society."

"I'm currently trying to buy a charter business," she says picking up a wrench from the floor plates. "I'm wheeling and dealing and talking creative financing with a bank this afternoon." Glancing at Mary Rose, she adds, "As long as I'm the boss, she can come with me wherever I go."

Across the bay in the Oakland, Captain Pinto readies for work. She'll be assisting a mammoth container ship down the Estuary. She and the ship's pilot will work together in a call and response duet. For a while, Pinto studied to become a pilot herself.

Brushing her blonde hair from her face she says, "I think I've shown other women it's possible to have a career on the water." For years Pinto

felt alone. There was only one other woman operator on the bay. "Nowadays when women come on ships, it's not a big deal. It's no longer shocking."

When Tugboat Annie pushed freighters, it was shocking. Her pluck delighted a generation of readers. When men tossed verbal abuse at her, she gave as good as she got. Annie loved her job. She loved being boss.

"I've been referred to as 'Tugboat Annie,'" says Parker. "For a while I didn't know what it meant."

Parker looked on the Internet for information and then started buying Tugboat Annie stories.

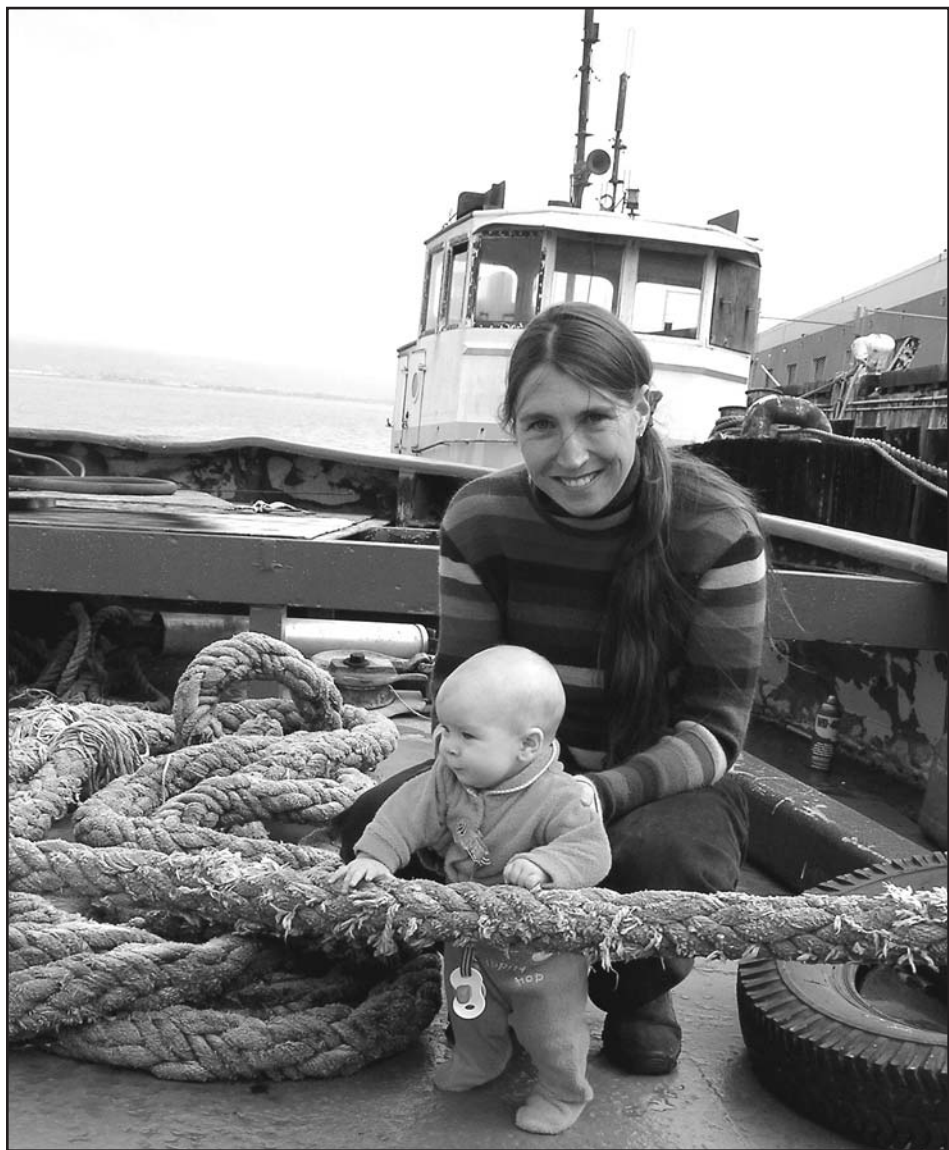
"I think her image, even for my generation, is a good one," Parker says. "Being female in a man's world isn't easy. Tugboat Annie wasn't willing to lie down and die—and neither am I."

Reflecting a moment, she adds, "Now, when I'm called Tugboat

Annie I feel it's complimentary. Annie drove boats because she loved it. I'm here for the same reason. There's nothing I love better than to captain a tugboat."

Tugboat Annie would be proud. Following her lead is a new generation of daughters. And in a basket on the deck of the *Nokomis* sits Mary Rose, grasping a toy boat. Maybe Mary Rose sees what we cannot—a big lady at the wheel, who beckons with a hearty laugh to come race the wind. In a few years Mary Rose may do just that, and give Tugboat Annie a run for her money.

Writer Maria Brooks, is looking for information on women seafarers working on ships before WWII for a television documentary about women in the maritime industry. If you know old timers who might want to participate, please contact Brooks at maritimewomen@aol.com



Melissa Parker and daughter Mary Rose.

STICKING TO THE UNION: An Oral History of the Life and Times of Julia Ruuttila

Sticking To The Union: An Oral History of the Life and Times of Julia Ruuttila.

By Sandy Polishuk.
Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2003.
288 pp.Hardcover \$75; paperback, \$22.95.

**Reviewed by Gene Vrana,
ILWU Director of Educational Services & Librarian**

This is a gem of a book about a larger than life, small-town, working-class hero by the name of Julia Ruuttila. Telling her own story through a compelling oral history interview with historian and writer Sandy Polishuk, Ruuttila’s life in the Pacific Northwest reveals a great deal about the lives of activist radical women who have so often been compelled to sacrifice or compromise their personal lives in order to act out their political beliefs and participate in the turbulent struggles of militant left-wing organizations and unions.

Most of her tale is set in Oregon and along the Columbia River—and much of her adult life there was in support of and in service to the ILWU. But the issues and events that marked her tireless dedication to the cause of workers and their unions as an organizer and a journalist (including decades as a correspondent for *The Dispatcher*) have a universal appeal that will move and inform unionists and their allies just about anywhere.

This larger appeal is made possible through effective editing and fact-checking by Polishuk, and her superior ability to repeatedly set the historical context for the twists and turns of Ruuttila’s life in recurring narratives that are clearly and concisely written in a style that is simple, descriptive and dramatic.

In a statement that echoes descriptions of many left-wing women, Ruuttila’s story, writes Polishuk, “was one in which political beliefs—working class solidarity and antiracism—were primary, and her personal life secondary.” Yet it is a great credit to Polishuk’s skills as an interviewer—and to Ruuttila’s general willingness to be open and honest about her life—that the reader can feel, humming beneath this extraordinarily political life, the tension of domestic violence, failed marriages, botched abortions and recurring depression.

This same tension between the personal and the political has been described elsewhere in the life stories of radical activists Elaine Black Yoneda (“The Red Angel”), Dorothy Healy (“Dorothy Healy Remembers”), and Peggy Dennis (“The Autobiography of an American Communist”). But unlike these women, Ruuttila never belonged to the Communist Party. Her family roots were in the Wobblies (the Industrial Workers of the World). She learned early on an independent brand of socialist politics. As Polishuk writes, “She wasn’t in the Party...her father had raised her to think for herself and she couldn’t submit to its discipline.”

Fortunately for many workers and members of the ILWU, Ruuttila also learned from her father that, “you had to build a base of support” before fighting for unpopular views. Her skills at developing allies and coalitions inside and outside the House of Labor won her respect, support and admiration from many who did not share her radical politics, yet joined with her to oppose racial and economic injustice—both on and off

the waterfront.

Unfortunately, however, Ruuttila also received from her father a set of personal demons that led more than once to suicide attempts—one claimed him, another, her son and she narrowly escaped her own. In hindsight she seemed to have reduced these terrors and depressions to manageable size with the same matter-of-fact simplicity that characterized her political decisions.

“I learned a great deal out of that episode,” she said. “I learned that when you get absolutely exhausted, you’ve absolutely got to stop. You’ve got to stop everything you’re doing and get a good night’s sleep and play some soothing music.”

And later, reflecting on her son’s death, she observed, “You know, the lives of working people are full of desperation.”

Whatever emotional scars she carried throughout her long life, they were easily matched by the physical ones inflicted during a succession of picket-line encounters with cops and goons who left her unable to do much more than desk work. By 1934, during the longshore strike in Portland, Ruuttila was increasingly known for both her fearlessness and her skill with writing leaflets and contract proposals on her trademark typewriter. During one harrowing escape from goons trying to keep her and others away from the striking longshoremen, an older Italian woman told her pointedly, “You with your machine of writing could do much.”

Soon after, Ruuttila found employment putting those writing skills to work for unions and to support her family. It was also a way she could directly join in and support what she saw as the heroic struggles of workers trying to fight their way out of the economic Depression:

“The strikes on the waterfront, in the camps and mills and other mass production industries in the thirties all had this factor in common: We won them, and we were no longer timber beasts, sawmill stiffs, and waterfront bums. We were the people who loaded the ships and sailed them, who made the head rigs turn and the green chains run. We were the workers of the world. Without us there would be no world.”

After World War II, Ruuttila’s life centered around the Portland waterfront, which she covered as a journalist for left and labor publications, and also as secretary to ILWU International Representative Matt Meehan (who had previously been the union’s International Secretary-Treasurer).

The period when she apparently came closest to unifying her political and personal goals began in 1951 when she married then-ILWU Astoria warehouse Local 18 (as opposed to now Sacramento longshore Local 18) activist and Communist Party stalwart Oscar Ruuttila and moved to live with him in Astoria, Oregon. There she began her decades of devotion to building the ILWU Auxiliaries—and helping Lois Stranahan and Clara Fambro to transform them from “ladies clubs” into a racially integrated, progressive political force, first in Astoria and then in Portland where she relocated in 1965 after Oscar’s death.

As with other portions of her journey, Ruuttila’s experience in the Auxiliaries includes anecdotes and observations that help the reader understand the nuts and bolts of those



activities, not just the big events.

Her writings also helped readers of *The Dispatcher* better understand politics and the ILWU in the Columbia River and Puget Sound areas. All in all she wrote for *The Dispatcher* for more than 40 years—first as Kathleen Cronin then as Kathleen Ruuttila.

She died in 1991 in Alaska, where she had moved after a series of disabling illnesses to live with her grandson. Somewhere along the line, perhaps during this latter period of her

life, she wrote her own fitting epitaph: “Died as she lived, shouting the system down.”

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MAY IS MEDICAL, DENTAL CHOICE MONTH

Active and retired longshore families in the ports where members have a choice can change medical plans during the open enrollment period May 1 to May 31, 2004. The change will be effective July 1, 2004. San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Portland/Vancouver active and retired longshore workers may change dental plans in the month of May for coverage effective July 1, 2004. In addition to the May open enrollment period, members may change their health coverage once at any time during the Plan Year (July 1-June 30).

The July 1, 2002 Memorandum of Understanding between the ILWU and PMA provides that new registrants in the ports where members have a choice of medical plans shall be assigned Kaiser HMO Plan or Group Health Cooperative HMO Plan for the first 18 months of registration. After 18 months, those registrants who have qualified for continued eligibility under Mid-Year/Annual Review hours requirement will have a choice of medical plans. New registrants in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland/Vancouver and Washington will have a choice of dental plans on the first of the month following registration, and may change dental plans during the Open Enrollment period and one additional time during the Plan Year.

MEDICAL CHOICE: The medical plan choice is between Kaiser Foundation Health Plan and the ILWU-PMA Coastwise Indemnity Plan for Southern California Locals 13, 26, 29, 63 and 94; Northern California Locals 10, 18, 34 (San Francisco), 34 (Stockton), 54, 75 and 91; and Oregon-Columbia River Locals 4, 8, 40, and 92. In the Washington State area, the choices for Locals 19, 23, 32, 47, 52 and 98 are Group Health Cooperative and the ILWU-PMA Coastwise Indemnity Plan.

DENTAL PLANS: For Los Angeles Locals, dental choice is between Delta Dental Plan and the Sakai, Simms, Simon and Sugiyama group plan. For San Francisco Locals, dental choice is between Delta Dental Plan, City Center Dental and Naismith group plan. For Portland/Vancouver Locals dental choice is between Blue Cross of Oregon Dentacare, Oregon Kaiser Dental Plan and Oregon/Washington Dental Service. For Washington Locals dental choice is between Washington Dental Service and Dental Health Services.

Information on the dental plans, and Kaiser and Group Health Cooperative medical plans, and forms to change plans can be obtained at the Locals and the ILWU-PMA Benefit Plans office. The ILWU-PMA Coastwise Indemnity Plan description booklet is under preparation and will be furnished as soon as it is available.

All enrollment cards must be completed and submitted to the Benefit Plans office by May 31 for the change to be effective July 1.

Basra and Umm Qasr—hotbeds of labor revolt in Iraq

By David Bacon

Longshore workers in the U.S. took another step closer to Iraq's dockworkers in March, when Henry Graham, president of ILWU longshore Local 10, sent a letter of support to workers in Umm Qasr. Graham's letter was inspired by reports coming from Iraq that workers on the docks of the country's largest port have begun to organize a union, and have already faced the firing of union supporters.

"We salute you for your bravery," Graham wrote. "We want you to know that we oppose any violation of your rights. Workers everywhere have the right to form unions. It is the only way we can win better pay, better conditions, protect our jobs, and secure our rights."

Since the U.S. occupation began, Iraqi dockworkers there have been receiving the same emergency salaries—roughly \$60 or \$120 monthly—decreed by the U.S. occupation authority for all Iraqi public sector workers. Iraqi longshoremen are employed by the port authority, a government enterprise.

When the occupation started, however, their income dropped because their profit-sharing arrangement was terminated. All Iraqi Port Authority workers had been paid two percent of the profits accrued from unloading fees. The loading fee per container was \$150 with two ships docking per week, unloading approximately 250 containers each.

Then in October, the occupation authorities decreed a new salary schedule, in which workers' wages would be paid in Iraqi dinars instead of dollars. That meant another sizeable loss in income, and workers began organizing as a result.

Port Director Abdel Razzaq issued a notice Oct. 25 banning any employee working for the Port Authority from speaking to any reporter or representative of any non-governmental organization without his permission. On the day the workers were set to vote on officers for their new union, the manager removed the banner announcing the election. Workers were told they had to wait until a new law was passed, since the current labor code contains a provision decreed by Saddam Hussein in 1987 banning unions in the public sector. The Bush administration, through the occupation authority, continues to enforce this law.

In November, according to the head of the Basra Federation of Trade Unions, Razzaq fired three port workers for trying to organize.

Workers were not deterred, however. In mid-January they organized a six-hour strike over the low wage scale, blocking people and vehicles from entering the main gate into the Umm Qasr port. Iraq issued new bank notes last fall, but port managers continued to pay workers in the old bank notes that could only be exchanged for new money at 75 percent of their face value. In the melee that ensued, the accounting office and that of Razzaq himself were occupied. The demonstration ended when occupation troops were called out. Since then workers charge that Razzaq is being protected by a unit of private militia, the Badr Brigades.

SSA OCCUPIES IRAQI PORT

The port of Umm Qasr is being operated by Stevedoring Services of America. It was the first Iraqi enterprise to be turned over, not just to a private owner, but to a foreign one. Even before U.S. troops had reached Baghdad, the Bush administration gave SSA the concession for operating it.

Privatizing Umm Qasr began the transformation of the Iraqi economy—from one based on nationalization and production for a domestic



market to one based on ownership by transnational corporations, sending their profits out of the country. To many Iraqis, Umm Qasr represents a new era of foreign domination.

Following Iraq's revolution of 1958, which overthrew the monarchy and threw out the British, 1,000 longshore workers labored on Umm Qasr's docks. Even in the heady days of Arab nationalism, however, they still had no guarantees for their rights and jobs. At first, subcontracting companies were allowed to hire dockers in a daily shapeup. Finally, workers rebelled. After winning recognition for their union, they demanded and won a hiring system under their control and a daily guaranteed wage, whether or not there was a ship at the dock to work.

These achievements are still remembered by older workers, and form a backdrop to the current effort to reorganize unions on Umm Qasr docks. Nevertheless, they seem like a distant dream. Life in Umm Qasr has changed completely for the people on the piers. A decade-long war with Iran, then the first Gulf War followed by 12 years of sanctions, and finally a new invasion and occupation, have all taken their toll. Much of the port lies in shambles, although the basic infrastructure is still in place.

Umm Qasr is an object lesson in the privatization of Iraq. Its fate will have a profound effect on the degree to which any future Iraqi government will be able to control the country's economy. By the same token, the jobs, the standard of living and the labor rights of the port's dockworkers will be a bellwether for the fate of hundreds of thousands of other workers in formerly state-owned enterprises throughout Iraq's economy.

The free trade ideologues of the Bush administration see the occupation of Iraq as a beachhead into the Middle East and south Asia. Their first objective is the transformation of the state-dominated economy of what was once one of the region's wealthiest and most industrialized countries into a free-market, free-trade economy.

This massive introduction of free enterprise began even before the invasion, with the granting of the first contracts for servicing the military and building its bases. Those were followed by others for rebuilding the infrastructure of the country itself, destroyed by war and sanctions. But this transformation is not limited simply to reconstruction contracts. The pre-existing economy of Iraq is set to be transformed as well, as the state-run enter-

prises at its heart are sold off to private, foreign investors.

Stevedoring Services of America, now SSA Marine, is poised to take advantage of both aspects of the growth of the private sector. The company, which has a history of tight political connections with the White House, received a \$4.8 million no-bid contract to operate the port of Umm Qasr March 24, 2003. According to the U.S. Agency for International Development, which granted it, the contract covers the assessment of the port's needs, assistance in making it operational and the ongoing management of dockside operations.

San Francisco's Bechtel Corp. began dredging the harbor in May. Then, on July 16, SSA began accepting commercial cargo, including container, break-bulk and roll-on/roll-off shipments. Despite its dilapidated state, Umm 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 port.)

UNION ORGANIZING SPREADS

As the organizing efforts in Umm Qasr unfold, workers in other industries near it in Basra are also organizing and challenging low wages. In Basra there have been three general strikes over wages.

In October 2003 a two-day wildcat strike took place at the Bergeseeya Oil Refinery, part of the Southern Oil Company, Iraq's largest crude oil pumping and refining company. Kellogg, Brown & Root (KBR), a division of Halliburton Corp., was given a no-bid reconstruction contract last summer.

Vice-president Dick Cheney was Halliburton's CEO, and still collects a million-dollar-a-year pension from the company. KBR brought in a Kuwaiti-based construction company, Al Koorafi, that began using Indian and Pakistani workers in place of the existing, experienced Iraqi workforce. Unemployment in Iraq is currently about 70 percent, so to protect their jobs Iraqi workers threw out the foreign workers and protested outside the company's offices. Tribal leaders representing the workers eventually resolved the dispute.

At the Southern Oil Company, workers organized a union. Headed by Hassan Ju'ma, they also banned foreign workers from its facilities following the Bergeseeya plant action. KBR tried to get indigenous workers to accept its foreign staff, but the

local workers refused to budge. The company asked workers to accept a 50 percent foreign staff, and then just five percent, two percent and even one percent.

"Iraq will be reconstructed by Iraqis, we don't need any foreign interference," Ju'ma said. "Drivers are the only foreigners we allow anywhere."

Then, in December, oil workers began challenging the wage schedules. This followed an attempt by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) to set a new schedule in September—Order 30 on Reform of Salaries and Employment Conditions of State Employees—that would have lowered the bottom rate for industrial workers in Iraq from \$60 a month to \$40. The order also eliminated all previous housing, food, family, risk and location subsidies.

Oil workers throughout Basra surveyed prices, and then announced that instead of lowering wages, the CPA needed to raise them. Southern Oil Company workers proposed their own wage schedule, setting the minimum at approximately 155,000 ID per month (\$85). They backed up the proposal with a threat to strike and shut off oil production. Workers also threatened to join the armed resistance if occupation troops were called in to take over the pumps, prompting the Minister of Oil to come to Basra. He agreed immediately to return to the old \$60/120 monthly scale.

In January electricity workers at the Najibeeya, Haarthia and Az Zubeir generating stations mounted a wildcat strike, stormed their workplace administration buildings, declared the CPA wage schedule void and vowed to shut off power if wages were not raised. The Minister of Energy also agreed to return to the old emergency wage scale.

"We hope that this strike can be conducted safely and legally," explained Samir Hanoon, vice president of the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions in Basra. "But if we cannot win through the legal procedures, we will take other actions—protests, demonstrations and total shut-downs. We realize that there may be some sacrifices, but we are ready to accept them. Our real problem is with the CPA, with Bremer."

Finally, in mid-January, Southern Oil Company unionists won the first battle when the CPA agreed to implement the union's wage schedule in the oil industry. By February, the Southern Oil Company schedule was being implemented only in the oil sector (the biggest public sector employer in Iraq), while other public sector industries, especially electricity, were still in negotiations. Many workers believe, however, they will receive the same, since a strike in the power sector would halt all other industries.

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Henry Graham's letter recognized the struggle undertaken by Umm Qasr and other Iraqi workers, and offered his local's support.

"You are not alone," he wrote them. "If dockworkers in the rest of the world hear about your situation, you can count on their support. On March 20, there will be national demonstrations throughout the United States to oppose the occupation of Iraq, and to demand the rights of the Iraqi people. Our union will be actively involved in those demonstrations, and on that day dockworkers in many ports on the Pacific Coast will not work on the ships. We will use the demonstrations to show our support for you, the dockworkers in Umm Qasr."

This article includes important information reported by Ewa Jasciewicz on the ground in southern Iraq during December and January on behalf of Occupation Watch.

Longshore history makes dramatic play “Fire on Pier 32”

reviewed by Larry Shoup

The many-faceted play “Fire on Pier 32” takes its title from a dramatic historical event. Worker demands for an organized voice on the waterfront during the crisis of the Great Depression led longshoremen to burn their company union contract books, the infamous “blue books,” on San Francisco’s Pier 32 in 1933.

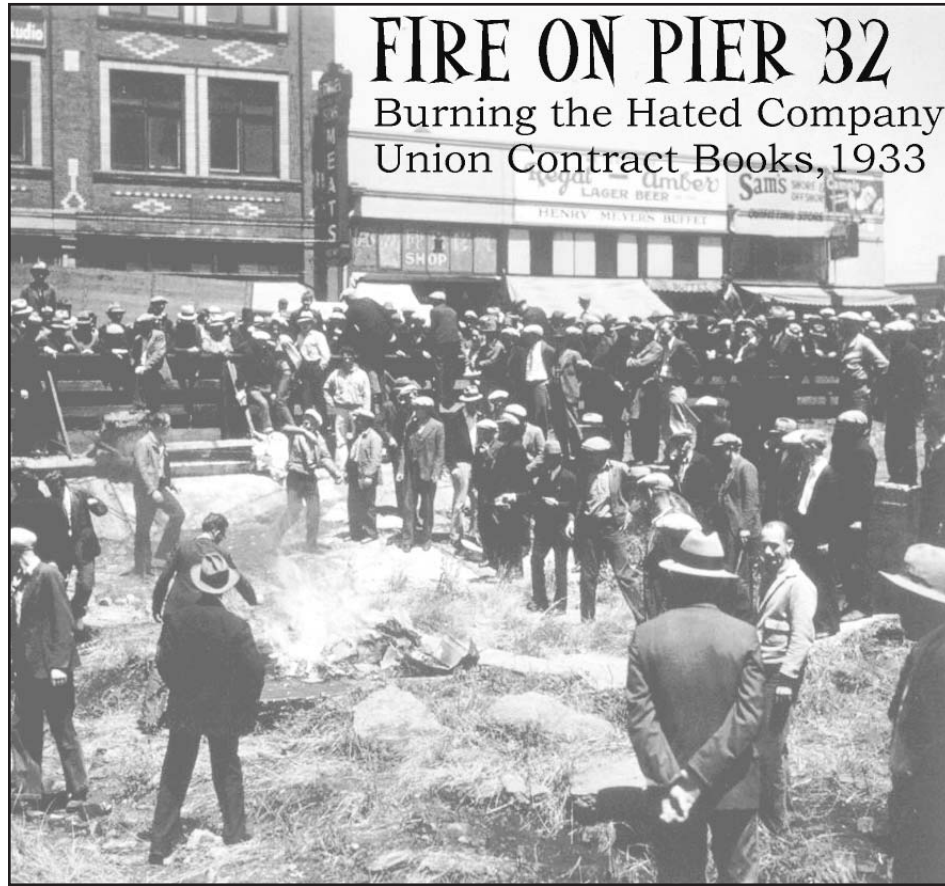
This collective act of defiance was pivotal in the history of both the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) and the larger American labor movement. The blue books were concrete representations of the slave-like conditions imposed on working people. Their burning was a mass act of rebellion that posed larger questions of the union shop, of how jobs were to be allocated, (the workers’ demand for a union-controlled hiring hall), of pay and pensions, as well as bigger social and political questions.

There was no turning back for the courageous workers who organized this waterfront bonfire. Their lives were now committed to the concept of democratic industrial unionism by and for the workers, and they now survived only through solidarity and struggle, through building their union. Their direct action and the actions of others around the country during the 1930s breathed life into a near moribund labor movement, showing that the way forward was militant democratic industrial unionism, organizing all workers irrespective of skill, race, gender or status.

The history of the ILWU represents one of the purest expressions of class consciousness and class militancy in the U.S., making its past, present and future of immense interest to us all. Perhaps no union in the U.S. has a more inspirational history for advocates as working people, real democracy and social justice. “Fire on Pier 32” reviews this dramatic history in three acts, with a cast of twelve, over two-and-a-half hours, covering the ILWU story from 1933 to 2003. It is about repeated employer offensives against labor, and organized, militant solidarity as the only effective union response.

The play begins with the 1934 maritime and San Francisco general strike, then covers the epic “march inland” to organize warehouse workers, the successful organizing in Hawaii, and the great strikes of 1948 and 1971, using solidarity to turn back successive employer offensives. Final scenes of Act 3 include the lock-out of 2002, when the union’s solidarity and strength was tested as the ILWU had to face down both the corporate bosses and the Bush faction of the national power structure.

In “Fire” National Writers Union playwright Jack Rasmus uses the Epic and American Musical theater traditions, as well as historic photo montage, to capture the conflict, spontaneity and passion of varied situations as the ILWU leadership and the rank and file collectively made history together. By establishing context using a narrator and ILWU archive photographs projected on an overhead screen, along with longshore workers and their key leaders as central characters, Rasmus is able to educate by provoking critical thinking and raising consciousness about social, economic and political relationships. His portrayals of boss and politician scheming at secret meetings expose the totalitarian impulses and venality of those who rule the corporate capitalist system. In another scene he shows how solidarity and the union’s collective dem-



ocratic power enforce safety standards and make a real difference in people’s daily lives on the job.

At the same time, “Fire” entertains, with six new songs in contemporary musical styles, performed by a chorus of three singers-dancers and the cast of actors. The lyrics and music of the play’s two theme songs, “The Song of Solidarity” and “Song of the New Unionism,” are particularly memorable, representing in musical form the main premise of the play. Other key songs include “The Song of Desperation,” “Government Man,” “The Web,” and “Moving the Money Around.” These songs focus on secondary themes: government always siding with the bosses, the infamous Taft-Hartley law and how the corporations play games during negotiations.

The acting is also outstanding. “Fire’s” central protagonists, Frank and Joe, are two young workers who grow and develop as they build a union that resists corporate attacks through solidarity. Their passionate portrayals of the rank and file helps us feel in our guts what it must have been like to be a worker with only his fists, courageously facing police and National Guard machine guns and tanks during the decisive battles of July 1934.

This play is a powerfully important contribution to the entire American labor movement. In “Fire” historical events and the union movement live again through art, allowing our collective history to emerge clear and true. We see the personal and social transformations that take place as workers and their leaders debate the strategy and tactics of resistance while facing the manoeuvres of the bosses and the betrayals of some corrupted leaders.

The play succeeds in giving a human face and emotion to the meaning of solidarity—born of struggle, nurtured by sacrifice and cherished forever in the hearts of those who come to know it as more than just a concept. The universality of Rasmus’ art helps us see deeper truths about ourselves and our current predicament. The result is a useable past, helping us see that our ultimate goal must be democratizing the world, confronting the corporate capitalist usurpation of our inalienable rights and emancipating all working people everywhere.

It has been said that the theater houses a nation’s soul. If this is true,

it can be said that “Fire on Pier 32” is one place where the soul of American labor resides. “Fire” is now on video and DVD, get a copy and see it with

your union brothers and sisters. It is wonderfully entertaining and instructive at a time when we face the Bush-Leaguings and Wal-Marting of America.

Larry Shoup grew up in a union household, his father was a member of the Machinists Union. He has had a varied work career and has been a member of both the old Retail Clerks Union (today’s UFCW) and American Federation of Teachers. He now makes his living writing and is a member of the National Writers Union, serving on its steering committee and as its delegate to the Alameda County Central Labor Council. Shoup has written three books and numerous magazine articles. He is currently working on his fourth book: “Rulers and Resisters: A People’s History of California.”

Get your copy of “Fire on Pier 32” DVD or VHS video are \$15 + \$3 s/h Audio CD or cassette tapes are \$10 + \$3 s/h

To order send check or money order to: Kyklos Productions, 211 Duxbury Ct., San Ramon, CA 94583. Or order by credit card on the Internet at www.kyklosproductions.com.

LETTERS

CONSERVATIVE TERRORISM?

I do believe *The Dispatcher* staff has hit a home run with the posting of those conservative letters. These [fellows] could be the most valuable tool to this union since the fork lift. Give these guys some column space, give ’em a topic to butcher and watch the response. When it comes time to renew the contract, let them report their stand. I believe we can turn the tide of apathy and non-involvement that some have into a union tidal wave. After we have succeeded, we can turn them on the AFL-CIO and boost a national return to unionism that has never been seen before. Sign these clowns up before the Bush administration has them put away as a terrorist threat for the way they incite good union men to jump into action.

Marty Kiilsgaard
Local 98

A REPUBLICAN VIEW

Quite remarkable that some brothers and sisters we have in our union cannot understand why one would be a Republican or a Democrat. From my perspective I can see that some Democrats are friendly to unions and can also see some propaganda and lip service that comes our way.

I am a Republican for some basic reasons. I believe the responsibility of the federal government is to provide for the security and defense of our nation. I believe in capitalism and providing a tax structure that awards those who succeed in business and does not penalize those once they have succeeded. Also it makes no sense to tax those on a lower income level, especially when some are at such a low-income level they receive government help. Property rights, human life, personal liberty, justice and swift punishment for those who commit crimes are important issues to me. Making sure our families are not taxed to death I believe are issues both parties agree on.

One look at this newsletter and many may see why some of our mem-

bership may have a problem with those who speak for our union. President Bush is criticized because of treatment to Iraq union members. Good grief, regardless if the war was appropriate, as far as American interests are concerned, you have to be an ideological cripple to believe Iraqi people are not better off with the monster Hussein out of there. A union in that regime supporting the dictator that murdered his own people is no brother of mine or any American.

Kerry voted for NAFTA and the rest of the trade agreements that put the American worker on an even worse uneven playing field. President Bush supports NAFTA also. I assume if Kerry wins, any Democrat for that matter, we hope they listen.

If President Bush wins, or any Republican, our hostile rhetoric has denigrated any kind of respect and communication that might have been possible. That’s not politics, that’s stupid.

Mike Sheldon
IBU, Puget Sound Region

THANKS FOR THE SUPPORT

Although I was at the grocery chain that did not strike, they signed a sweetheart because we only have 155 stores in the Inland Empire, but we are the same Local 1428, and many of us walked the picket line also. I just wanted to thank you for helping out with your cash donations the various times during the strike.

We were just fortunate that we, Stater Brother’s Markets, weren’t affected as far as our jobs. I myself was disappointed more unions didn’t show support. People do not realize one contract will eventually affect them also, in time. So just thank you for your support at those crucial times when these people needed help. I have been with my company 24 years, and who would have thought it would be like this. You make many of us proud.

Sheri Staggs
Glendora, Calif.



PEOPLE

Farewell, Asher

By Alan Benjamin

Asher Harer, a longtime member of the ILWU and steadfast fighter for social justice, died Feb. 16 in San Francisco. He was 91 years old.

Harer was born in Calexico, Calif., Aug. 14, 1912, in an impoverished household. His mother raised six children on her income as a night telephone operator.

After one year at community college in Calexico, Harer moved to San Francisco, inspired by the 1934 general strike and the power of the trade union movement. In 1937 he went to work in the San Francisco food industry. After joining the waiters' union, he helped to organize small restaurants. During the 1941 hotel workers' strike, he helped edit the union strike bulletin.

Harer then began work on the waterfront, where he became a member of ILWU Local 10. He participated in the longshore strike of 1946 and served on the ILWU Strike Committee during the 1948 strike. While organizing the picket lines against the scabs, Harer's neck was broken.

"In those days, they had no health plans," Ruth Harer, his wife of more than 50 years, said. "He didn't know he had a broken neck. He just knew it hurt."

Harer suffered a back injury on the docks in 1965 and transferred to ILWU clerks' Local 34 a couple of years later. In 1971 he participated in his last waterfront strike, and took an early retirement in 1974.

LEGENDARY FOR ANTIWAR AND CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVITY

Over the years Harer was active in many other labor struggles, as well as civil rights and antiwar movements. Throughout his life Asher could be found on just about every picket line for workers' rights and social justice in the San Francisco Bay Area.

He organized support for the United Farm Workers, was active in the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE) and was executive secretary of the Bay Area Fair Play for Cuba Committee in the early 1960s. In 1963 he coordinated the mayoral campaign of Sam Jordan, a Black community activist in the Bayview/Hunters Point district, who ran on the independent Freedom Now ticket.

Years later it was revealed through Freedom of Information Act disclosures that a COINTELPRO disruption campaign was carried out by the FBI to try to promote a political split between Sam Jordan and Harer, something that never succeeded.

Harer was also a leading figure in opposition to the war in Vietnam, helping to organize the huge antiwar rallies and marches in San Francisco and serving as a central organizer of the 1967 Prop P campaign, a local ballot initiative to allow the people of San Francisco to cast a vote on the U.S. war in Vietnam. He participated in the pro-choice movement and the defense of clinics, helping women to enter Planned Parenthood and other family planning clinics being attacked throughout the Bay Area.

After retiring in 1974 Harer became active in the ILWU pensioners' organization and in the Gray Panthers.

"HANDS ACROSS THE GLOBE" AWARD

On Feb. 11, 2000 at the Open World Conference in San Francisco, Walter Johnson, secretary-treasurer of the San Francisco Labor Council, presented Harer with a plaque in appreciation of his "lifelong commitment to

working people across the globe."

In presenting this "Hands Across the Globe" award, Johnson told the 585 trade union delegates from 56 countries gathered at the conference:

"I have the honor of presenting a lifetime achievement award to a trade unionist who has given his entire adult life to the trade union movement and to worker internationalism. It's someone I have had the pleasure of knowing and working with for about 25 years, and that is Asher Harer.

"Asher is a retired member of the ILWU. He is one of those persons, whenever we had picket lines, wherever there was a problem where everybody had to fight a battle, he was always there—together with his wife, Ruth. And he made sure that his voice joined the voices of those crying for freedom for workers fighting for everything that could go on."

In receiving the award Harer thanked his entire family, particularly Ruth, without whose constant support and collaboration, he said, he could not have done any of this work.

"We were together on picket lines, demonstrations and so forth," he said. "We are a union family."

In his last public appearance on behalf of workers in struggle, Harer addressed a solidarity rally Oct. 10, 2002 with the ILWU workers, who were facing a union-busting Taft-Hartley injunction imposed by the Bush administration. At the rally Harer recited one of his favorite poems, Shelley's "Rosalind and Helen," published in 1819:

*"Fear not the tyrants shall rule forever,
Or the priests of the bloody faith,
They stand on the brink of that mighty river,
Whose waves they have tainted with death;
It is fed from the depths of a thousand dells,
Around them it foams, and rages, and swells,
And their swords and their sceptres I floating see,
Like wrecks in the surge of eternity."*

On the occasion of Harer's 90th birthday in August 2002 the San Francisco Labor Council issued a "certificate of honor in public appreciation of Asher Harer's special leadership role in San Francisco's labor and social justice movements for over six decades." The certificate commended Asher, in particular, for serving as "a mentor and example for all young people striving for a more just and humane world."

Likewise, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors issued a Certificate of Honor "in appreciative public recognition of distinction and merit to outstanding service on behalf of working men and women in the ILWU, as well as the community at large." The Board of Supervisors went on to "salute



Dispatcher file photo

Asher Harer at a Fair Play for Cuba rally in 1961.

Asher's lasting devotion and example to the causes of union, labor, civil rights and peace."

MEMORIAL MEETING AT LOCAL 34

A memorial meeting to celebrate Harer's life and contribution to the labor and progressive movements was held March 6 at the ILWU Local 34 hall. About 170 people, including many longshore workers, attended.

Among the ILWU members who spoke to honor Harer's memory were Jack Heyman, business agent of ILWU Local 10; Clarence Thomas, executive board member, ILWU Local 10; and Brian McWilliams, ILWU delegate to the S.F. Labor Council—all of whom recounted details about Harer's history in the union and spoke of the influence Asher had on them.

Hal Yanow, a Local 10 retiree who was Harer's partner on the docks, also paid tribute to him.

"Though I didn't share Asher's passion to change the world, I always admired him for being the best worker in whatever job he did," Yanow said. "I was proud to work at his side."

Bob Carson, a Local 34 clerk and editor of the book "The Waterfront Writers: The Literature of Work," recounted some of his memories of Harer, and read from one of Harer's essays. The book is a collection of essays and poems produced over the years by a group of full-time dockworkers on the San Francisco waterfront. Harer's essay tells the story of when they were loading cargo onto one

of APL's passenger boats at Pier 50 and how he won a \$10 bet by outsmarting a second mate.

Another ILWU retiree, Reg Theriault, then read a few pages from his new book "The Unmaking of the American Working Class" that described in vivid detail how Harer and fellow ILWU Local 10 members Willie and Tony "educated" the scabs during the 1948 strike.

Longtime friends and family members also spoke about Harer's tremendous and lasting influence on their lives, and his deep confidence that working people and their difficult fight for dignity and justice would ultimately prevail, no matter the obstacles, over corporate greed.

The meeting concluded with a brief thank-you statement from Ruth Harer to ILWU Local 34 for hosting the memorial meeting, to all who came to pay tribute to Harer, and to the ILWU for holding fast in preserving the union's pension fund.

"It makes it possible for retirees and their spouses to make ends meet, even after they're gone," she said.

Harer is survived by his wife, Ruth; his brother Homer; his three children, Michael Harer, Corie Tripoli and Katharine Harer; and his two grandchildren, Matthew Tripoli and Leo Maxam.

The family suggests donations to the UFCW Grocery Workers State Council Strike Fund, at P.O. Box 5158, Buena Park, CA 90620.

Smolin-Melin Scholarship Fund announcement

Trustees of the Smolin-Melin Scholarship Fund are prepared to accept applications for scholarships for the academic year 2004-2005. Now is the time to indicate your interest. June 1, 2004 is the application deadline.

Victor Smolin and Carlton Melin were long time members of Local 10. They left a sum to establish the scholarship fund. They specified that scholarships were to be available to children of Local 10 members to further their "collegiate" education. Trustees of the Fund interpret "members" to mean active members **in good standing at the time of disbursement of**

scholarship funds, deceased members and retired members. The Trustees interpret "collegiate" to apply only to **full-time study** (at least 12 units per semester or quarter) at either a four-year college or an academic junior college.

Based always on available assets, the Fund historically has awarded scholarships in a range from \$1000 to \$2500 for full-time students at four-year colleges or universities, and from \$750 to \$1750 for full-time students at two-year colleges.

Trustees are Richard Zuckerman, counsel for ILWU and for Local 10, Reino Erkkila, a retired member of

Local 10 and a friend of Victor Smolin, and Eugene Vrana, Associate Director of Education and Librarian for ILWU.

If you have a son or daughter who is applying to enter college next fall, or is already a college student who is planning to continue, and the above requirements are met, you might want to apply for one of these scholarships.

To request an application, simply call Mathilda Mendonca, secretary to Mr. Zuckerman at (415) 771-6400. She will then send you the application form with the necessary explanatory material.

ILWU Book & Video Sale

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

BOOKS:

- The ILWU Story:** unrolls the history of the union from its origins to the present, complete with recollections from the men and women who built the union, in their own words, and dozens of rare photos of the union in action. **\$7.00**
- The Big Strike** By Mike Quin: the classic partisan account of the 1934 strike. **\$6.50**
- Workers on the Waterfront: Seamen, Longshoremen, and Unionism in the 1930s** By Bruce Nelson: the most complete history of the origins, meaning, and impact of the 1934 strike. **\$13.00**
- The Union Makes Us Strong: Radical Unionism on the San Francisco Waterfront** By David Wellman: the important new study of longshoring in the ILWU. **\$15.00** (paper-back)
- A Terrible Anger: The 1934 Waterfront and General Strike in San Francisco** By David Selvin: the newest and best single narrative history about the San Francisco events of 1934. **\$16.50**
- The March Inland: Origins of the ILWU Warehouse Division 1934-1938** By Harvey Schwartz: new edition of the only comprehensive account of the union’s organizing campaign in the northern California warehouse and distribution industry. **\$9.00**

VIDEOS:

- We Are the ILWU** A 30-minute color video introducing the principles and traditions of the ILWU. Features active and retired members talking about what the union meant in their lives and what it needs to survive and thrive, along with film clips, historical photos and an original musical score. **\$5.00**
- Life on the Beam: A Memorial to Harry Bridges** A 17-minute VHS video production by California Working Group, Inc., memorializes Harry Bridges through still photographs, recorded interviews, and reminiscences. Originally produced for the 1990 memorial service in San Francisco. **\$28.00**

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