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Dear Editor,

Much has been written in the Dispatcher about immigration and undocumented workers. Most of what I have read has missed the mark. The culprits are not our fellow workers!

Rarely do people wake up on a nice sun-shining morning and out of the blue decide to migrate. On the contrary—most people flee their homelands out of need. Since the passage of NAFTA our fellow workers south of the border have seen their purchasing power plummet by 50 percent!!! Think about that! Think about making 50 percent less in 2008 than you did in 1993 (the year NAFTA was enacted).

The delegates elected Joe Cortez of Local 13 as Caucus Chair, Frank Ponce de Leon from Local 13 as Secretary, and John Tousseau of Local 63 and Scott Mason of Local 23 as Sergeants-at-Arms.

The ILWU Coast Committee presided along with the Caucus officials on a stage in front of the room that included President Bob McEllrath, Vice President Joe Radisich, Coast Committeemen Ray Ortiz and Leal Sundet.

Many delegates were veterans of previous caucuses, but this was the first time for some.

“Everyone at the Caucus was trying to address issues and solve problems,” said Jennifer Gumm, a first-time delegate from Local 12 in Coos Bay, Oregon. “The continued on page 3

Letters to The Dispatcher

Dear Editor,

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ILWU endorses Barack Obama for President

T he ILWU International Executive Board endorsed Senator Barack Obama for President on February 28th, concluding that he is “the best candidate for our union and for working families.”

Board members made their decision after an extensive process that involved interviewing the major campaigns and examining their positions on key issues that will impact ILWU members in the coming years. Republican Presidential candidates were not interviewed because they failed to address the key issues below, including:

Bringing our troops home safely from Iraq. Ending the war continues to be a concern of Executive Board members, rank-and-file union members, and the general public.

Obama’s record on Iraq was an important factor in winning the ILWU endorsement. “By speaking out early against the war, Obama took leadership at a time when others were reluctant,” said International President McEllrath.

Supporting the rights of workers to join unions without employer threats is a priority. Obama pledged to support the “Employee Free Choice Act” that would create new rules to make it easier for workers to join a union. But actually passing the “Employee Free Choice” in Congress will require a huge effort from all union members - and a President who will make it a top priority and help deliver enough votes for the proposal to become law.

Making quality, affordable health care available to all Americans is another pledge that will require some heavy lifting from union members in order to become law. All major Presidential candidates declined to support the single-payer approach favored by the ILWU.

Obama has pledged to sign a universal health care bill by the end of his first term.

Several dozen Working America canvassers knock on doors across Oregon every day, including this one in the Portland area. About two of three people several dozen Working America canvassers knock on doors across Oregon who are approached will sign up to join the AFL-CIO’s community affiliate, and many will register to vote. They will then be contacted by union volunteers and staff about elections and updates on where their elected officials stand on working families issues.

Oregon longshore workers gear up to make a difference

W ith all of the talk of Presidential politics, how many of us are thinking of statewide races—our next state representatives, members of Congress and ballot measures that could have a big impact on ILWU jobs and families?

In Oregon, working on elections has become a way of life for more ILWU members. By leveraging their volunteer hours through the Oregon AFL-CIO’s political program and making strategic political contributions, they’ve helped make working families a force to be reckoned with.

In 2006, Local 8 “B Woman” Megan Premo was released to the state federation’s Labor 2006 campaign. She contributed to the final tally of 200,000 phone calls, 7,000 door knocks and 65,000 workers fired by members.

Local 5 Business Agent Ryan Takas was named “Volunteer of the Week” by the Oregon AFL-CIO for taking the initiative to canvass—by himself, in the rain.

In a small state like Oregon, this kind of legwork makes a big difference—especially when unions combine their resources and work together. Voter turnout among Oregon AFL-CIO’s affiliate unions was 78 percent, compared to 68 percent of the general electorate. This extra turnout has helped Oregon elect six union members to the state legislature. The state’s governor was once a union Steelworker and Bricklayer, and the Labor commissioner is a union Electrician. Oregon has the second highest minimum wage in the nation, at $7.85 an hour. And for the past ten years, union members have helped defeat a slew of anti-union ballot measures brought into the state from right-wing anti-labor organizations.

This year, Oregon’s ILWU members are poised again to help elect candidates that are committed to working families—and pledged to work with the Oregon AFL-CIO and other unions and community affiliate, Working America.

“Working America allows people who don’t have a union at work to join the AFL-CIO directly,” Tom Chamberlain, President of the Oregon AFL-CIO, told the Dispatcher.

“Two-thirds of people that canvass talk to will sign up, and one in five will immediately write a letter to an elected official. It’s what makes democracy work for busy working people. We’re proud to once again have Longshore involvement in our political program.”

Working America also allows the union to communicate with a whole new universe of voters who are swell ing the union-oriented ranks by about 50 percent. A strong program in 2008 will amplify the positive election results of 2006 which paid off for working families to be heard in the 2007 Legislative Session on issues they’d been fighting for all along.

“During the 2002 lockout, Longshore workers in Washington and California could collect unemployment benefits, but Oregon shut us out,” said Local 8 President Jeff Smith, “So in 2007, with a majority in the state House and Senate, we worked with the AFL-CIO and other unions to successfully change the law. It was the first time when enough legislators cared about us — and it changed because we got more involved.”

The Caucus also adopted a resolution calling for stop-work meetings during the day shift on May 1 to support U.S. troops in Iraq by calling on the Bush administration to bring them back home safely now.

ILWU TITLE OFFICERS
ROBERT McELLRATH President
JOSEPH R. RADISICH Vice President
WESLEY FURTADO Vice President
WILLIAM E. ADAMS Secretary-Treasurer

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ILWU women speak out

MARY ZARTMAN, BOOKSELLER, POWELL’S BOOKS, LOCAL 5

"We’re kind of an oddball local in the union as a whole. It’s kind of like we’re the scrappy, introverted booksellers, up next to brawny guys with to-die-for muscles. I like it when the big guys come around. I introduce myself as a longshoreman; it’s primarily a male union and that’s the image I have in my mind.

“At Powell’s, it’s more of a matriarchy. Even though Michael Powell is our boss, we have lots of women in management. It’s the least sexist company I’ve worked for. There’s no reason why you can’t move up here. Because my supervisor is a mother, she understands when I need to leave early or come in late for parenting reasons. We’ve also had members on our staff have sex changes, and they get a lot of support. There was a membership-wide email announcing someone’s transition and congratulating them for it. I love the way we support each other.

“We are among the lowest-paid locals of the ILWU, and I do think it affects us in the bigger picture. I still don’t have a living wage here after 11 years. We have good health care; I don’t complain about that.”

CLOVJEAN GOOD, LOCAL 94

"About 10 or 11 of my family are with the ILWU. The ILWU definitely is a family. After knowing so many people for so long, you have all different types of union brothers and sisters that you pick up as family members along the way.

“I was one of the first when they hired a big group of women into Local 13 in 1985. So that was a challenge because they didn’t have a lot of women on the waterfront then, and a lot of rules and regulations had to be changed. It was basically a man’s world. But with hard work it always changes.

“A lot of people in this union teach you and help you move up the ladder. A lot of people struggled within the ILWU for us to move up, for us just to be in the locals, so I think we have a good history. An injury to one is an injury to all—let’s hang together.”

BETTY PERVERZOV, SECOND VICE PRESIDENT, ILWU LOCAL 517—VANCOUVER, BC

"Someone asked me once why I serve on the Executive Board, and I replied that someone else had served for my sake, so I am simply carrying on the tradition. I feel it’s every union member’s responsibility to serve the Union in some way—either by being on the Exec, participating on a committee, or by attending the general meetings. Harry Bridges once said that a group of workers standing together is an unstoppable dynamo, and I firmly believe that.

“I feel one of the greatest challenges is to understand the history and strengths of the Union. Many of the struggles that faced Union women in the past are still being fought today, only in different forms and our responses to these struggles can often utilize previous solutions in an updated form.

“Another great challenge is education, because the world is changing so quickly and it is important for us to be as informed and current as possible. Regarding opportunities for Union women, there are several: there is equal pay for equal work, the knowledge is power for union members.

“I think both men and women should have the opportunity to pursue whatever they want within the ILWU. I would recommend longshore work to the women. I like to work on the waterfront, drive heavy equipment, and don’t mind getting dirty. I also like being involved with taking care of the union; making sure things are run right with integrity and that we’re not fighting among ourselves. So I would recommend women do what they want to do, pursue being a clerk, a walking boss, or a union official. The opportunities are limitless.”

JENNIFER GUMM, SECRETARY-TREASURER, LOCAL 12

"It was a privilege to be at my first Longshore Caucus and see how the body works, how resolutions are processed, and see how democracy works. It lasted two weeks, but I relished going through all the reports. Knowledge is power for union members.

“I think both men and women should have the opportunity to pursue whatever they want within the ILWU. I would recommend longshore work to the women. I like to work on the waterfront, drive heavy equipment, and don’t mind getting dirty. I also like being involved with taking care of the union; making sure things are run right with integrity and that we’re not fighting among ourselves. So I would recommend women do what they want to do, pursue being a clerk, a walking boss, or a union official. The opportunities are limitless.”

CATHERINE PORTNALL, LOCAL 63 OCU

“Women today have greater opportunities in the ILWU because of the accomplishments that other women achieved in the recent past.

“It took a tremendous amount of inner strength and courage to tackle issues such as equal employment opportunities in what was previously a male-dominated union.

“I can only imagine the daily challenges and difficulties they faced as they addressed equal rights for women in the ILWU.

“Although our opportunities are greater today, I feel we still face the challenge of working with those who will always have the mindset that women have no place in the harbor.”

Mary Zartman, bookseller, Powell’s Books, Local 5

Betty Perverzov, Second Vice President, ILWU Local 517—Vancouver, BC

Jennifer Gumm, Secretary-Treasurer, Local 12

Cathy Portnall Local 63 OCU
Kristy Lovato, President Local 5

A nna Zambrano started at Local 20 at the age of 20, and that was 28 years ago. She works at the Borax processing facility in Wilmington, doing most every job in the plant.

“My main jobs are silo attendant and ship loading,” she said. “Unloading railcars is part of that job, and loading the silos. I also drive a big cargo Cat moving eight rail cars at a time.”

She has family all over the waterfront, including one son in Local 13 and another in port security. Her female cousins and their daughters, and her daughter-in-law, also work the docks.

“Back when I got my card, you didn’t see women, but now it’s a way of life,” she said. “More women and their daughters are working now, before it was just men and their sons.”

“There are a lot of young women in their twenties starting out, it’s dangerous, it’s scary, but you see a lot of single women. I was a single woman supporting three kids when I started. It was a good job, especially with the insurance.

“I love working down on the harbor, it’s physical, it’s a man’s job—so they tell me—they kid me about it. It’s really beautiful when I sit up in the tower loading the ships, I can see the whole area where I grew up. I can walk out on the docks, see the ocean, the bridge, and planes taking-off and landing.”

“I do worry about the kids on the docks because it’s so dangerous. My son was almost killed four years ago when a top handler fell on his UTR. I tell the kids that you have to respect the job, the heavy machinery; you have to respect the people you’re working with, and always respect their lives.

“I do a lot of rail switching. My partner and I rotate the jobs; one day I do the switches and one day he’s pulling the rail cars with the big Caterpillar. We work two Cats; one’s named Fred and the other is Wilma. We’re like family there because we’ve grown up together. My uncle’s still working as a linesman and he’s 73 years old. I wouldn’t have traded this job for anything.”

K risty Lovato works at Powell’s Books in Portland and is President of Local 5. She supported unionization at Powell’s when workers decided to join the ILWU a few years ago.

“One of the reasons we were so passionate was because the ILWU has made space for women, and for people who are passionate about politics.”

But she also believes that every union has a long way to go in recruiting women.

“We’ve made a lot of progress in the US, but part of what we should do is to provide examples and mentorship for women in other countries who are organizing, especially with the growing importance of cross border solidarity,” she said. “It’s important for us to not think of injustice toward women as a problem that’s gone away. Our sisters in other countries have issues about family care and health care that they struggle with everyday.”

“One of the things that’s been helpful for me is to see the strong women mentors from other locals in this union. Women should have mentors from other locals in this union. Women should have men—women mentors from other locals in this union. Women should have men—women mentors from other locals in this union. Women should have men—women mentors from other locals in this union. Women should have men—women mentors from other locals in this union. Women should have men—women mentors from other locals in this union. Women should have men—women mentors from other locals in this union. Women should have men—women mentors from other locals in this union. Women should have men—women mentors from other locals in this union. Women should have men—women mentors from other locals in this union. Women should have men.”

Julie Ann Fisher, President Local 34, at the Longshore Caucus.

J ulie Ann Fisher has been a Local 34 clerk since 1998. Her father, John Fisher, started in the clerks in 1947. Julie attended the 2008 “Longshore Caucus; her first time as a delegate.

“I think it’s positive to get all the locals together to understand each and everyone’s position,” she said. “It’s good to know what’s happening in the other local. For example, I was at a meeting in the Port of Spain and saw a port and a cosmopolitan city; so I think it helps me understand some of the struggles that LA faces, being so large and having so many casuals to incorporate into their workforce.”

D arlene Robertson started in the industry in 1984 and became Local 4’s first female African American walking boss in 2000. On her way up she worked every single longshore job on the waterfront.

“It was very hard to achieve that goal,” she said. “It was the hardest thing I’ve accomplished in my life. Once I got into the foreman’s position, it was another whole journey being the first, like Jackie Robinson.

She works at Evergreen Terminals and has been a yard foreman for six years. Many workers choose to come back to Evergreen every day, in part because they like working on Robertson’s team. She is currently raising her two grand children and has a daughter and sister working as casuals.

“But when I first came into the industry I had nobody in the union,” Robertson said. “I’d wake up, and my mom would say ‘it’s been a very long journey, I pray every day to ask God to give me the strength to do the things I need to do. A lot of things still need to be changed, but I’m better here now. There is a union.”

Darlene, like many others, values the diversity training they receive as a tool to fight racism, but she also sees need for improvement.

“I think we need somebody from inside the industry teaching it, because no one who doesn’t work in the industry will ever understand the industry,” she said. “I know Martin Luther King had a dream, a dream that one day Blacks, whites, all nationalities would all stand together. I pray that we all have a unity, and when we say ‘An injury to one is an injury to all’ it’s not saying, it’s a reality.”

D ebbie Dean joined Local 91 five years ago this month. She had worked in the Scalers’ Union and sometimes picked up longshore jobs before joining Local 10 in 1990.

“When working in the Scalers’ Union I never knew there was any other longshore job but lashing,” Dean said. “I dragged chains from the forward end of the ship to the aft end. I had a little daughter and I needed some benefits for her, medicare, more than money.

The men expected women to prove something, she said. Her advice: “Don’t stand around thinking you’re so beautiful you don’t have to do anything.”

“Put your hands on something, make the job a bit easier. They might say, ‘oh women on the waterfront, they just want to ride on somebody’s coat,’ but you got to show them you’re made of something tough.”

Debbie’s daughter, Danica French, is now a ‘B’ member in Local 10.

“I used to go to the hall, and Danica would say, ‘mom, did you get a job?’ and I’d say, ‘no, today.’ The irony is now that Danica’s little girl Kayla is asking her ‘mom, did you get a job?’ and she’d say, ‘no, not today’ and her daughter would say ‘maybe tomorrow.”

Debbie was active in Local 10, working on the Executive Board, the Investigative Committee, and the Northern California District Council that coordinates political action. Her sister, Bonnie Houston, is an ‘A’ registered Local 10 longshore woman.

She offers some practical advice that she received from the old timers who passed it along to younger workers:

“Keep the strong, take care of this job, it’s a diamond in the rough. With this job, if you want to live on Blueberry Hill you can. This union will take care of you if you take care of this union. The union is a beautiful thing.”

Editor’s note: This March edition of the Dispatcher includes a special focus on women in the ILWU in honor of International Women’s Day— the March 8th holiday that gets too little recognition. The holiday has several origins, but all involve important labor struggles by working women—both here in the US and abroad.

Some say the idea for Women’s Day was born one hundred years ago in New York City when 15,000 women marched in 1908 to demand a shorter work week, better pay, and the right to vote. A few years later in March, 1911, over one million labor activists—women and men—gathered to celebrate the first Women’s Day event in Europe. Less than a week later, 148 women workers were killed on March 25th at the “Triangle Fire” in New York City because a factory-owner locked workers inside for two million Russian soldiers had been killed in the war and starvation was rampant. The women’s strike helped force the Czar to reform. Another chapter won the right to vote when the country’s first democratic government was established. For more information about Women’s Day and the labor movement, go to www.internationalwomensday.com.
Local 6 President Jeff Smith joined port officials from Vancouver, Wash. and the Pagoda Hotel. The AFL-CIO will notify member unions in every state asking them to avoid patronizing the hotels because of a dispute between ILWU and Local 142.

"The employees at the Pacific Beach Hotel are hard-working and have been very loyal to the hotel through the years," Local 142 President Fred Galdones said. "They have given a lot; now they deserve to get something. They deserve some respect on the job and recognition of the fact that they take care of the hotels.

"The ILWU has made an open offer to the hotel to meet anytime, anywhere to settle the contract," Galdones said. "We are ready to sit down and negotiate today."

IBU-Columbia River Region signed a second contract for the third workers at McCall Oil on Jan. 28. The new contract provides for wages and benefits, and includes a multi-employer pension plan, which will provide retirement security for members.

The workers at McCall Oil operated and maintained a family healthcare.

"In the old contract, the company refused to negotiate with the union. They would not meet with us. We offered a proposal and instead of meeting with the union, they offered a take it or leave plan," Local 142 President Fred Galdones said. "It took 14 months to get the first contract. The workers took negotiation classes provided by the ILWU and the ILWU. This empowered them, gave them a voice, and they stepped up to win this contract."

Local 142 Brooklyn members also joined Native American activists recently at U.C. Berkeley when they called on the University to preserve a Native buri-al site and return Native American remains to their original ancestral territories. For more information about Native rights and the Longest Walk, go to: www.longestwalk.org.

Local 34 voted to donate $1,000 to the UAW "Justice-4-five" fund in February. Members included Russell Miyashiro presented the check at the Saturday, Feb. 23 rally.

The local’s Warehouse Caucus members express gratitude to the owner, Brian Scott, for the continued on page 8

NOTICE FROM ILWU/PMA WELFARE PLAN: MAY IS MEDICAL, DENTAL CHOICE MONTH

Active and retired longshore families in the ports where members have a choice can change their health and dental plans during this month. Before the Plan Year (July 1-June 30), 2008. Any change that you make will be effective July 1, 2008. In addition to the May open enrollment period, members may change their health/dental coverage once at any time during the Plan Year (July 1-June 30).

Medical Choice: The medical plan choice is KF 1,002 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 qualify for continued eligibility under the Mid-Year/Annual Review hours requirement, will have a choice of medical plans. New registrants in San Francisco, Sacramento, Stockton, 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 at additional times, as long as they remain eligible.

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 6, 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, the dental choice is between Delta Dental and Harley Burman Group (formerly Sadler Group). For San Francisco Locals, the dental choice is between Delta Dental, City Center Dental Health Services, and Gentle Dental San Francisco group plan. For Sacramento and Stockton Locals, the dental choice is between Delta Dental and Delta Dental Health Services. For Portland/Vancouver Locals, the dental choice is between Blue Cross of Oregon, Oregon Community Dental Group, and the ILWU/PMA Coastwise Trustee. For Local 5 in Los Angeles, Washington Locals, the dental choice is between Washington Dental Service and Delta Dental Health Services.
ILWU Canada's Ken Gregory passes

ILWU Canada and the Van Isle Pensioners honored brother Kenneth Anthony Gregory on Feb. 28 at one of his favorite places—the Cottonwood Golf Course in Cedar, B.C. The choice was especially fitting, as he had been a sportsman most of his life, starring in football, basketball, lacrosse and curling.

Ken was born Jan. 8, 1929 in Nanaimo, B.C. As a young man he wanted to see the world, so he joined the Royal Canadian Navy and saw many sights, including the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953.

After leaving the Navy, Ken worked many jobs before joining the ILWU where he was elected Local 508 Chairman in 1993. He was elected Second Vice President of the entire ILWU Canada later that year. The members elected him Local 508 President in 1971 and 1972, and re-elected him to Second Vice President the same year. He participated in some tough bargaining during the 1972 contract strike.

"Ken knew what path the union should follow to resolve issues when the player had his head in the game," said Local 500 retiree Frank Riley, who served with Ken as ILWU Canada Secretary-Treasurer. Ken also served with the Nanaimo, Duncan, and District Labour Council as vice president.

"Whenever he was asked to do anything he would do it," Van Isle Caucus delegate Bill Duncan said. "He was a real help to me when I first became president of Local 508 and again when it came time for us to serve as a guide, it works as a stand-alone introduction to ILWU history. The Coast Committee will provide interested locals with copies of the 21-page program at no cost.

Caucus guest Connie Chaney, a supervisor from Local 63, touched an image of a weathered Longshore union card and said, "I saw that and I said, 'Wow! That's it!'" For her, the stamps and hand-scrubbed initials inside reminded her of attending meetings and paying dues as a longshore worker in Local 13.

"I used to keep my card at home where I wouldn't lose it," she said. "It was very special to me."

To order the "Legacy of 1934" program or inquire about the display, see box below.

---Ken Price

The Legacy of 1934 exhibit is available in various sizes for display in your area. A booklet explaining the exhibit is available as well.

Full Size Display: The 50-foot long, 10-panel exhibit is available on loan from the ILWU, for the cost of shipping. This display requires approximately 1200 square feet in a room or hallway, and is perfect for art exhibits, union halls, and indoor community events. Portable Displays: Smaller, poster-sized replicas of the "Legacy of 1934" are available for sale. Printed on poster board or DuraBrite paper, with laminating and carrying cases included, these are appropriate for tabletop display at union halls, trade shows, classrooms and more. The cost varies according to size and material.

Program: The 21-page accompanying program is available, courtesy of the Longshore Division Coast Committee, in boxes of 200.

Contact: To borrow the full-size display or receive free copies of the program, contact ILWU Director of Educational Services Gene Vrana at gv@ilwu.org or 415-775-1302. To purchase a poster-sized replica, contact Richard Bermark, Project Director and designer at richard@rjb86.com

---Ken Price

The Everett Pensioners Club watched “Eye of the Storm" at their November meeting, then dipped into their pockets and donated to the ILWU Political Action Fund (PAF). Members had invited their spouses to watch the screening documentaty about the 2002 longshore negotiations and lockout.

President Harold Pyatte brought a large-screen TV for the event. Of the Club's 32 members, 22 attended, along with 10 spouses.

Following the video showing, PCPA President, Rick Austin, who is also an Everett Pensioners Club member, gave a brief recap of the 2002 negotiations and talked about upcoming Longshore Division bargaining. He emphasized the importance of unity and preparation, and told the Club that political action and public relations will be key elements of ILWU success in 2008. He also reminded everyone that those programs take money to run.

Mary Heatlie asked, "Where do we send our checks?"

Someone else proposed voluntary contributions. Everyone agreed. So right there at the meeting over $6,800 in PAF contributions were raised. President V.N. Pyatte who telephoned members who were unable to attend the meeting and told them what had transpired—and another $3,000 was contributed.

"Everett pensioners realize the importance of participating in our union's programs," Pyatte said. "Their response was both heart-warming and encouraging. Up and down the coast, retirees pitch-in and we must never forget: An injury to one is an injury to all."

—from the Everett Pensioners Club
News and Notes cont’d from p. 6

Fraser Port Authority. One group of port workers were Local 517 members, but the other two workforces were not yet united. In order to reconcile differences between the work cultures, the parties agreed to seek federal mediation prior to all workers joining the union.

Local 517 members include clerks, environmental assessment officers, engineers, project administration, security officers, port security officers, computer programmers and others. “We worked together to make it as fair as possible for the existing computer programmers and others. Security officers, port security officers, women have also been elected to the Secretary-Treasurer and the First and Second Vice President’s positions.” “Women are a strong voice in our local,” Webster said. —Reported by Tom Price

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In addition, family farmers in Mexico have been devastated because huge U.S.-based multi-national grain companies have flooded the Mexican market with cheap (for now, anyway) corn and other crops. Family farmers cannot compete. Many have gone under. Why does this surprise anyone when workers flee abject poverty? Wouldn’t you? Or to put it another way, what wouldn’t you do to feed your family? When sateogaging and finger pointing goes on between workers, the bosses and their stooges in Congress wring their hands with glee. They have gotten workers fighting amongst themselves. Divide and conquer is their game! If blame is to be assigned, let’s make sure we hit the right marks. The culprits are the lawmakers who passed NAFTA, WTO and other horrible, anti-worker, anti-union, pro-corporate “free” trade agreements that place profits ahead of national allegiance to the gods of money and power.

The ILWU’s Ten Guiding Principles reads: “The basic aspiration and desires of the workers throughout the world are the same. Workers are workers the world over. International solidarity, particularly to maritime workers, is essential to their protection and a guarantee of economic power in times of strife.” We have more in common with any worker from anywhere than we do with the sell-out artists in Congress, and certain Ivy League coiffed and manicured collaborators passing as labor leaders. The job of unions is to organize workers and defend workers. As workers we must reach across imaginary borders and join hands with fellow workers from Canada and Mexico, and then out-organize that sinister establishment of employers who have organized long ago. The old saying, “all boats rise with the incoming tide” is apropos to organizing. Another old saying, “we’re all in this boat together” should provide ample warning against shooting holes in our common conveyances while watching Daddy Warbucks jet his way to his Swiss bank account.

There is no exception to our motto: “An Injury To One Is An Injury To All.” —Richard Austin, President Pacific Coast Pensions Association

Dear Editor,

Last month’s “News & Notes” mentioned an arbitration victory for Bay Area longshore workers who honored the anti-war picket line at the Port of Oakland in May of 2007. The report may have given readers the impression that Local 34 is responsible for this victory. In fact, Local 10 deserves the credit for handling this arbitration. The PMA forced the issue first at Local 10, but brought the same issue before Local 34’s Labor Relations Committee. Local 34 benefited because we were not forced to arbitrate the same issue. —Richard Cavalli President of Local 34

CORRECTIONS:

International Organizer Mary Winzig wrote last month’s story, “Harborside workers win their strike for justice.” Her contribution is appreciated.