Liverpool 10th anniversary: Dockers gather to remember, rededicate

ORAL HISTORY:
Sam Kagel and the warehouse ‘March Inland’

Change to Win founds new labor federation

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The old saw of environment versus jobs is dying hard, but its days are numbered. The idea that concern for not being killed by poisons and pollution is a “job-killing” policy is almost a thing of the past. More and more workers and their unions are understanding this is a fraud perpetuated by the owner class to make working people pay for profit and privilege one way or the other. It’s not acceptable that the only way to make a living means over the long run killing yourself, your children and your fellow community.

It’s been 35 years since the first Earth Day sought to bring environmental awareness to the public. Most of today’s workers grew up with that as an accepted background moral. We now all recognize, try to avoid chemicals in our food and water and know we should conserve water and energy even if we don’t always do all we could.

Manufacturing and the ever-increasing transportation industry in the U.S. and Canada have been coming under increasing scrutiny and criticism as their health impacts accumulate and become statistically obvious. Not surprisingly, where pollution is at its worst—in the California ports of Los Angeles, Long Beach and Oakland—is where the movement against it is organizing the strongest and loudest.

Now the LA Harbor Commis- sion, with anti-pollution pioneers S. David Freeman as its new presi- dent and ILWU Local 13 member and Southern California District Council President Joe Radisich, is moving rapidly and radically to make Los Angeles the international model of a low-pollution port. They understand that jobs and economic expansion need sustainable systems and bold action. They are looking to quickly put in place new technologies for low- or no-polluting equipment for docking vessels, yard equipment, trucks and railroads.

Whether the Commission’s ambitious goals can be achieved, especially in the time frame being proposed remains to be seen. But it certainly won’t happen with that aggressive attitude, without the approach that you can both clean up and grow the port.

The ILWU International President

Steve Stallone
Assistant Editor

By James Spinosa

ILWU International President

Time goes so fast in our hectic, modern world that taking the time to look back—even a short while—is hard to do. Seeing the patterns in those events and trying to figure out what they mean for our future is even harder. But what happens to the ILWU, its members and their families, and what happens to the working people of this country and around the world depends on our figuring it out.

In late September 1 and 15 other ILWU officers and rank and file flew to Liverpool, Great Britain. We went to participate in a commemoration of a dock worker struggle 10 years ago that has defined port labor relations around the world ever since (see story page 5).

As part of an anti-union campaign in Great Britain in the 1980s conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s government abolished the country’s National Dock Labour Scheme set up to nationalize the ports and guaranteed job security for union dockers. The ports were privatized and casual, non-union workers brought in to replace the union ones. The Liverpool dockers, some of the country’s strongest and most militant union workers, resisted the boycott and held onto their jobs.

In September 1995 a group of about 80 dockers set up a spontaneous picket line when about 25 of their co-workers were fired and replaced by non-union workers. The remaining 400 dockers refused to cross the line. An injury to one was an injury to all.

For their efforts all the Liverpool dockers were sacked and replaced by non-union workers. In response, the dockers, who had a history of solidarity, took action in support of South Africa’s anti-apartheid movement, against Chile’s military dictatorship and others, tried to organize an international movement in support of themselves this time.

The ILWU understood the significance of this episode early on, understood that if long-unionized dockers in a major world port could be quickly replaced by casual workers laboring without guaranteed wages and conditions, it could happen all over long-shore union. Our members contributed heavily to the financial support of the unemployed Liverpool dockers while they kept up their picketing and fighting to get their jobs back.

In 1997 the Neptune Jade, a ship loaded by the employer that fired the Liverpool dockers, sailed into the Port of Oakland. ILWU members refused to cross a community picket line and wouldn’t touch the cargo. The ship sailed on to Vancouver, B.C. where ILWU members there also refused to handle it. Japanese dockers gave it a similar greeting when it went there. The action buoyed the Liverpool dockers’ hopes, but was not by itself enough to win them back their jobs. The international dock workers movement was united and coordinated enough at that time to beat back this concerted attack on Liverpool.

Still their loss exposed things all of us in the international dockers movement learned from and must continue to learn from: the need for solidarity in action, and about its strategy, coordinated and timely use.

At the same time we learned the employers’ strategy against us. So we were not surprised when in 1998 Australian Prime Minister John Howard and Patrick’s Stevedoring moved against the Maritime Union of Australia. This time the international dockers movement mobilized quickly and with multiple actions.

The ILWU took action against the first scab-loaded ship from Australia, the Columbus Canada, when it came to the U.S. Again, ILWU members, this time at the Port of Los Angeles, wouldn’t cross a community picket line to work the cargo. The ship was sent back down under and releaved by union labor. Other docker unions around the world also responded immediately with solidarity actions, and the combined effect backed down our enemies.

When the employers and the state of South Carolina decided to test the strength of ILA Charleston Local 1422 in January 2000, bringing in scab labor to do the local’s work, the union longshore workers set up a picket line. When a massive police force was sent in to bust heads and imprison workers like they used to do in the Old South, the ILWU was there immediately to say “No!” And we moved quickly to rally other unions, union federations and civil rights and community groups to the cause.

Then the Spanish dockers of Coordinadora backed us up with targeted pressure on the employer that had used scab labor in Charleston. That pressure made the employer back down, and the right-wing state Attorney General quickly concluded the case saw his political career vanish, the Charleston Five won their freedom and the remains of the ILWU longshore workers of Charleston are stronger than ever.

Then came the ILWU’s turn with our 2002 negotiations. Sure we played that bargaining and struck. And now, the ILWU’s turn to support the American labor movement. But the employ- ers also know the ILWU belongs to international dockworker associa- tions that were committed to supporting us. That gave the employ- ers pause and saw us through to our victory.

In all our calculations, there was one variable the employers could never quite account for. They could never quite comprehend workers’ empathy and compassion for each other, in a word—solidarity. At the gathering in Liverpool, leaders of docker unions around the world recommitted themselves to each other and the international movement to keep our ports union and safe.

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ILWU International President

Published monthly except for a combined July/August issue, for $5.00, $10.00 non-members.

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Remembering the past to better the future

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By Jack Heyman

Once again dockworkers from around the world met in Liverpool Sept. 23-24, this time not to co-ordinate solidarity actions for striking Liverpool dockers, but to recognize those unions that participated in the worldwide actions and learn and understand that struggle will be the foundation for future waterfront battles.

The Liverpool struggle began 10 years ago when working-class dockers spontaneously set up a picket line over substandard conditions and other union-busting moves by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. Their action sparked a strike action by Gate Gourmet workers, mainly South Asian women, earlier that month. Their action sparked a strike action by Gate Gourmet workers, mainly South Asian women, at the airline's world headquarters in Teterboro, New Jersey. That key element of solidarity was betrayed by the lack of support of their own union, the T&G, the Trade Union Congress (Britain's AFL-CIO) and British Prime Minister Tony Blair's so-called New Labour Party.

Britain, along with the rest of the world, witnessed the workers' solidarity in today's global economy. In the heat of the Liverpool battle, maritime unions around the world, including those in Canada, Australia and New Zealand, rallied in support of the dockers. As a result, the Liverpool dockers lost their jobs but they couldn't mobilize mass picketing on the Mersey docks to assert their rights. That is where international solidarity is desperately needed.

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DITCHING DIRTY DIESEL

Longshore Local 10 President Trent Willis (at microphone) joined health, environmental and community groups Oct. 18 to publicize a state law prohibiting diesel truck idling that has been on the books for over a year, but is regularly ignored and violated. They held a press conference on the issue and ILWU members handed out more than 600 informational flyers to truckers at the Port of Oakland.

Local 10's actions were part of a coordinated "Don't Sit Idle Day of Action" by the Bay Area Ditching Dirty Diesel Collaborative, a group of 20 organizations—including the American Lung Association, the United States Environmental Protection Agency, the California Department of Health Services, the Pacific Institute, Contra Costa Asthma Coalition, West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project and Bayview Hunters Point Community Advocates—whose goal is to reduce diesel pollution regionally.

Particular matter from diesel engine emissions, the fine black soot that pours from truck smokestacks, has been shown by various medical experts to be carcinogenic and contributes to higher rates of childhood and adult asthma, as well as other medical conditions. In portside communities like West Oakland, residents face 90 times more diesel emissions than the state average, while there are more than 350 asthma-related emergency room visits per year associated with diesel pollution in the Bay Area.

Willis was joined by Oakland City Councilmember Nancy Nadel, regional physicians and public health experts, truckers and representatives of various communities whose health has been most severely impacted by diesel emissions. Willis said his local was supporting the Day of Action's efforts in the Bay Area because he and his fellow longshore workers are part of the community and that they are exposed to the same risks from diesel emissions at work and home as other Alameda County residents. Willis also pointed out that more state revenues must be devoted to building a cargo movement infrastructure that does not pollute the air and relies upon alternative fuels—like biodiesel or liquid natural gas—rather than the conventionally-polluting diesel.

"Part of the co-benefits are health benefits. On the issue of transportation, we have to decrease the use of petroleum-based diesel," Willis said. "We're spending billions monthly on the unjust war in Iraq, and this money could be going towards improvements in port infrastructure, highways, rail and other transportation efforts rather than truck idling in our neighborhoods," said Willis. "This money could also go towards retrofitting tractors and trucks to burn biodegradable fuel."

Two days after the Day of Action, Bay Area Ditching Dirty Diesel Collaborative members persuaded California Air Resources Board (CARB) officials at a public meeting in Sacramento to close a loophole in the state idling law that permits trucks with sleeper cabs to run their engines while driving. The CARB voted unanimously Oct. 20 for the new rule that after Collaborative members illustrated the impacts of these vehicles’ emission on community health while also showing how its passage would allow truckers to conserve 160 million gallons of fuel each year statewide. One technological solution to overnight truck idling being installed at locations around California is called Truck Stop Electrification (TSE), which allows truckers to plug in to an electric grid when they park.

—John Stawiler
October 2005

How the other half percent die

by Jack Rasmus

A fter more than four years of incessant tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations, George W. Bush and Co. are now preparing to come back to the table for another huge tax cut feast at the expense of workers and consumers in America.

Congress has passed record tax cuts every year from 2001 through 2004, with more than 80 percent being distributed to the wealthiest taxpayers and corporations. Last April, the House of Representatives passed—and now the Senate is considering—another $1 trillion handout to the rich by repealing the Estate Tax, also called the “Death Tax.” It is a tax heirs of the super rich pay when they sell family estates and leave their or her property to them as beneficiaries.

Even before the current proposed Estate Tax cut, the tax burden in the U.S. has been shifting dramatically for the last several decades—with workers paying relatively more and the wealthiest one percent of households paying progressively less.

In 2000, the year before Bush took office, the Estate Tax applied to only two percent, or $2,000, of the 2.5 million households of those who died that year. And for that two percent, there was still a $1.35 million deductible before a 55 percent tax rate on the estate applied.

For Bush's 2001 Estate Tax cut, less than one percent of wealthiest families remained subject to the tax. By 2005, that deductible for the tax had been reduced to only 13,700 out of the more than 2.6 million heads of households who died this year. And even their deductible level has been raised to $4 million and their tax rate has been reduced to 45 percent. Furthermore, under the current law, by 2009 the deductible will rise to $7 million, and only $2,400 will be subject to the tax at that time.

Still, Bush and his wealthy backers have been pressing hard throughout 2005 for immediate and permanent repeal of even today’s watered-down version of the death tax. Even though that tax is scheduled to disappear altogether after 2009, they are refusing to wait four more years.

Hurricane Katrina recently dealt a wild card into the table stakes Estate Tax cut game, however. With what looks like $500 billion at minimum needed to rebuild the Gulf Coast, the tax cut prove difficult (though not impossible) for pro-corporate/pro-wealth interests in Congress to pass another $1 trillion cut to the tax, or just one percent of taxpayers at the same time.

So as a contingency Bush and the pro-wealth interests in Congress have developed a fall back position namely as an event a permanent repeal of the tax is not immediately possible. Led by Senator Jon Kyle (R-AZ), an alternate proposal in the Senate at present is to raise the Estate Tax by 20 percent of households and the full picture. To cap off his tax legacy on behalf of corporate America in his second term, Bush wants to totally restructure the entire tax code. The campaign to do that kicked

Bush's tax cuts could pay for the alleged $3.4 trillion shortfall in Social Security, fully resolve the real growing crisis in Medicare funding and provide free prescriptions drugs for all Americans.

$11.6 trillion—in tax cuts that money would eliminate Bush's alleged $3.4 trillion shortfall in Social Security, fully resolve the real growing crisis in Medicare funding and provide free prescriptions drugs for all Americans.

By Bill Otten

Maritime trades workers toiling amidst the back of truck exhaust and ship emissions face a dramatically heightened risk of contracting leukemia and other forms of cancer, according to experts who spoke to a gathering of union officials in Long Beach Sept. 23.

“The ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles are the single largest source of harmful pollution in the South Coast Air Quality District,” said Richard Takishibu-Drury, an attorney and a former adviser to the Clinton Administration’s EPA panel on environmental justice.

Statistics show that 70 percent of all cancer risk in the harbor area is due to diesel particulate matter, a situation now made worse by a ruling from a NAFTA panel that allows older, dirtier Mexican trucks into the U.S. “Exposure in the Harbor is 10 times or more than that of the general population,” Takishibu-Drury said.

“Occupational cancers are an epidemic, as four out of 10 workers will contract cancer,” said Raphael Metzger, a toxic tort litigation lawyer whose clients have included leukemia and cancer patients whose illnesses were allegedly contracted from workplace exposure to products like benzene. “I know the ILWU has seen large clusters of lung cancer and ultimately, we’re all front-line workers,” Maritime Trades president Larry Barragan said.

Toxic tort litigation and coalitions with environmentalists spurred intense debate, with Barragan calling the entire topic “highly controversial.” But all agreed that workers are the ones on the front line who suffer the greatest effects of workplace pollution.

“Workers are really the canaries of occupational cancers,” Metzger said. “A lot of your members are going to develop cancer that will be caused by exposure to chemicals in the workplace, like benzene. The rate of incidents is much less in the general population.”

Metzger told union leaders that benzene is so unsafe that studies have shown the current federal OSHA standard of one part per million is enough exposure to cause cancer. Scientific evidence indicates a standard of one-tenth part per million is the maximum level a person could safely be exposed to. By settling on a standard that industry claims is the lowest it can afford to meet, the rule for benzene guarantees workplace cancer.

But employers have always warned that health and safety regulations will be the financial ruin of their industries, and are only proven wrong when power political forces them to comply. Another benefit of good anti-pollution measures, Takishibu-Drury noted, is that the upgrades in infrastructure required creates jobs.

Metzger pointed out other ways the legal deck is stacked for business.

The whole workers comp system was set up to protect employers,” said Metzger, who pointed out that the highest monetary compensation for a worker who dies on the job is capped at $150,000.

With daily ship traffic representing the equivalent of one million car trips, and older Mexican trucks spewing benzene-laden exhaust into the air, workers need to reach out to the community and environmentalists to form what Takishibu-Drury referred to as a green-blue-brown coalition.

“When we live and work is the most important environment to focus on,” said Takishibu-Drury.
Representing the Union: Sam Kagel and the ILWU

Introduction by Harvey Schwartz

This is the second in a series of oral history articles featuring the legendary Sam Kagel, who retired as Coast Arbitrator for the longshore industry in 2002 after 54 years on the job. In the 1930s, well before he began his storied career as an impartial arbitral judge, Kagel was an economics graduate student and then a union organizer with the Pacific Coast Labor Bureau, a consulting firm that represented organized workers in negotiations, mediations and arbitrations.

Kagel was employed with the Labor Bureau from 1932 to 1942. He left to serve in the War Manpower Commission when the U.S. entered World War II. After the war ended in 1945 he became an impartial arbitrator and attended law school. By the 1970s he was the nation’s leading figure in labor arbitration.

During the great 1934 West Coast maritime strike, Kagel was a close consultant to Harry Bridges, the longshore union and other waterfront worker groups. We testimony about that phase of his seven decades in labor relations was the focus of last month’s oral history article.

This month the spotlight is on Kagel’s association with the warehouse union in the five years following the 1934 strike. Those were the days of the longshore union’s triumphant organizing drive into the San Francisco Bay Area warehouse industry that became known as “the march inland.” As a representative of the longshore union’s new warehouse local, and several other Northern California unions as well, Kagel participated in the events of that period on a daily basis.

In 1999 I was commissioned by the ILWU Coast Labor Relations Committee to interview Kagel. Those 1999 discussions provided the basis for this article. I would also like to acknowledge Jennie Kagel, J. E. Biebe and San Francisco State University Labor Archives Director Susan Sherwood for their help. Front page portrait: courtesy San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

SAMB KAGEL
Edited by Harvey Schwartz, Curator, ILWU Oral History Collection

In the 1930s there were lots of warehouses in San Francisco. The city was a big distributing center. You had public warehouses and warehouses in grocery, drug, hardware and coffee. All of them were part of the waterfront, really. Right after the 1934 strike most were still unorganized. But soon there was a conscious decision to move off the “front” and on to the warehouses. And for good strategic reason. They were easy pickings, too, because they were paying 45, 55, 65 cents an hour with hardly any other conditions. Those wages were low even for the Great Depression.

Eugene Paton was one of the San Francisco warehouse organizers. He was an extraordinary guy. I remember how Pat got recognition at this one warehouse that specialized in packing fancy Italian olives and stuff like that. Pat had the workers organized, but the employer wanted to go to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) for an election. Congress had recently passed the Wagner Act of 1935 that set up the board. Well, Pat said to me, “This guy wants a vote. Okay, we’ll give him a vote.”

I went to the plant with Pat. He asks the guy, “You want a vote?” The guy answers, “Yes,” Pat says, “Well, come on out to the gate.” Off we go. Pat has the steward with him. He turns to the steward and says, “Tell the guys to come out.” They start coming out, and Pat tells the employer, “Count ‘em.” That was the vote—the whole company! There must have been a hundred persons working there. They didn’t stop work. They just walked out and walked right back in. The employer had his “vote.” He recognized the warehouse union quickly all right.

At most other places where the people were organized shortly after the 1934 strike, the employer either knew it and accepted it or, once in a while, asked for a card count. There was an “atmosphere” for union organizing in those days. People were eager to sign up and many employers got it. But this guy was so adamant that it had to be a formal vote under the Wagner Act that Pat got a little pissed. So he said, “I’ll really give him a vote.”

The public warehouses was the first employer group that we sat down to negotiate with. Wes Howell headed a key company in that group and he represented the employers. It had taken us a long time to get an agreement to meet. It was a real touchy deal. I can still see Wes Howell sitting on one side of the room across from Pat, myself and the people from the union. Well, there had been a movement within the warehouse local at the time that there should be an audience of workers. So we had an audience about two or three rows back.

I was the economics guy with the proposals. Therefore I started the meeting. All of a sudden one guy in the audience stands up. He says he wants to say something. Everything stops. He starts, “My wife passes the Roos Brothers clothing store on her way to work. She sees all the wonderful clothes in the window and she believes we should have enough money to buy them.” The place was stunned ’cause this guy was not part of the negotiating committee and he was not an officer.

Finally the guy sat down. With that, Wes Howell said; “I don’t think we should continue with this meeting.” It took another four or five weeks to get back into negotiations. Thereafter, we didn’t have an audience. We had a negotiating committee that represented the warehouse persons in a particular plant and any officers of the union who wanted to be present. Pat and I would keep away from guys who were constantly making what I call “speeches,” too. We had a job to do. The job was to negotiate and get a contract that was acceptable to the persons affected by it, period.

Once a place was organized the employer would sit down and negotiate seriously or we’d have a strike. In those days we had a lot of strikes going on all the time, and not only in the warehouse industry. There were strikes on at Safeway, department stores, hotels. During the whole period between ’34 and 1937, ’38, there was hardly a time when there weren’t four, five or six strikes going on. All of this union activity, of course, was inspired by the longshoremen winning the 1934 strike. That victory gave backbone to a lot of people to organize.

For example, how come the department store clerks got organized? Well, around 1937 the longshore union’s new warehouse local went on strike at Woolworth’s dime store in San Francisco. One of the clerks working there was a young woman named Marion Brown, later known by her married name as Marion Sils, labor leader. She was talking to the warehousemen who were on strike. From that she got an idea of what the hell a union was all about. Ultimately that led her to call a lot of people working in the big Emporium store and they arranged to have meetings at night. Bingo! You’ve got an organization going.

I was involved in an important labor dispute at the Santa Cruz Fruit Packing Company in 1935. The wage rates at Santa Cruz Packing were around 35, 45 cents an hour with no other conditions. With the conditions so poor at Santa Cruz, getting the people organized to get a decent wage was easy. I didn’t speak to the people directly or sign them up, but I helped the organizers with the plan.

Santa Cruz was an outfit that canned food and sent it around the world. Some of the workers there were clerks, the union asked to be organized. A lot of people who were working in various places did that after 1934. The demand was made upon Santa Cruz to enter into collective bargaining. In this case we wanted to get the company certified under the new Wagner Act.

A lawyer named Paul St. Sure represented Santa Cruz. He was the guy who headed the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) in the 1950s and negotiated the famous Sure Mechanization and Modernization Agreement (S&M) of 1960 with Harry Bridges and the ILWU. Paul took the position that Santa Cruz was not covered by the Wagner Act because less than 50 percent of its product went into interstate commerce. Since the constitutionality of the act was based on its covering industries that affected interstate commerce, St. Sure thought he had a workable argument. He was not a lawyer yet, but the regional NLRB took the position I took and the union took, that the act still applied since interstate commerce was affected.

The case went through the court of appeals. We won. A couple of years had passed by then. I’d been dealing with Paul St. Sure on many cases involving many unions. He was a straight-on guy. We had a great relationship and rarely needed to go to arbitration. Of course,


Local 6 President Eugene Paton trying to conduct union business during a labor dispute at Euclid Candy Company in San Francisco just after the warehouse “march inland.”

Local 549 warehouse representative of the ILWU Merchant’s Association (PMA) in the 1950s and negotiated the famous Mechanization and Modernization Agreement (M&M) of 1960 with Harry Bridges and the ILWU.
when it came to the Santa Cruz case, Paul—being an attorney—went through all of the steps right up to the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 1938 St. Sure went back to Washington, D.C., to argue before the high court. The attorneys for the NLRB were there. When Paul came back from Washington he called me up. He said, “I don’t think I’m going to make it.” He asked, “Why do you say that?” He said, “Because of some of the questions these people asked me.” I said, “Well, congratulations, I’m glad to hear that.”

Paul was right. The majority of the Supreme Court justices held that Santa Cruz’s business did affect interstate commerce. Thereafter the Santa Cruz judgment was considered, in legal language, a “leading case,” because it decided an important element of the statute in question. One result was that it widened the overall application of the Wagner Act.

In the early organizing years, 1935, ’36, ’37, there were two basic issues that always came up. This was all part of the “march inland,” when everybody was organizing—hotel workers, grocery clerks—not just our warehousemen. One issue was that the unions wanted to have the right to arbitrate discharge cases. The employers wouldn’t agree to that. The other issue was the unions wanting to have the closed shop, which was legal in those years. A closed shop meant that only union members could be employed in a plant.

One day while there was a grocery strike going on, “Navy” Bill Ingram called me up. Ingram was the football coach at UC. The players scab on the longshoremen during the 1934 strike. He’d been dumped as coach and had been appointed head of labor relations for Safeway, Inc. I wanted to know what this closed shop thing was all about. Obviously, his background was in labor relations.

I knew Ingram didn’t care about the union’s point of view. You think he’d be happy with the idea that the union wanted to be secure so it could beat the ass off the employers every year? Of course not. So I told him a union was like his business. You had to have a certain amount of money to survive. He’d be in my office tomorrow if there’s anything you want.” And they left.

I immediately telephoned Jack Shelly, then the secretary of the San Francisco Labor Council. He said, “I’ll take care of it.” He called the chief of police, whose men visited Gordon at the St. Francis Hotel, where he was staying. They asked him what he was doing in town. He said he was there to introduce a new cleaning process. The police then saw that he went out to the airport. They put him on a plane headed East. He indicated he was going to stop off at Reno, so they alerted the Reno cops, who wouldn’t permit him to get off the plane. So off he went. That was the end of my experience with the gangster Waxie Gordon. I didn’t know what the hell was going to happen. I offered, “Do you want me to arrange a meeting with the union?” No, he didn’t want that. “I’ll be in your office tomorrow if there’s anything you want.” And they left.

The “hot boxcar” during the 1938 San Francisco warehouse lockout. The rail car was loaded with scrap iron and I was on the picket lines, protesting what the Japanese were doing to the Chinese.

The contracts in different groups in the industry—the grocery houses, coffee houses, and so forth—had different termination dates. We used to go from one group of employers to the next trying to get a better deal in each set of negotiations. This was called “whipsawing.” The employers finally decided they wanted one “master contract” in the whole industry to stop the whipsaw.

The ILWU boycotted the export of scrap iron to Fascist Japan to protest the country’s invasion of China. I participated in the picket lines down on the waterfront. My point here is that this boycott was not related to negotiations or contracts. The ILWU was always socially minded, and not just the ILWU.

The union movement never said, “All we’re interested in is how much money we’re getting today,” because labor by its very history was part of a social movement. It always asked, “Who the hell got schools? The eight-hour day? The five-day week? Who was concerned about children working? Who was concerned about hell got schools? The eight-hour day? The five-day week? Who was concerned about children working? Who was concerned about children working?”

The contracts were written into so many kinds of internal machinery to settle these beefs, the unions would have to strike every time there was a dispute or a suspension. Many of the employers could ultimately see that, ‘cause it made sense. That’s how we got arbitration clauses written into so many of the early contracts.

As is generally known, the ship owners tried unsuccessfully to bribe Harry during the 1934 strike. I even cited a Matson Navigation Company source on this in a memo I wrote. Still, in my experience there were actually very few underhanded efforts to end labor disputes in those early days, or even after. Our area of the country was always pretty clean.

One time, though, I was in a San Francisco saloon called The Streets of Paris. This was 1937. ’38. I was waiting to meet with a guy who was coming from a union meeting. It was after ten o’clock at night and there was hardly anybody in the place. I was sitting there reading the newspaper when three guys came in. One was a little short stubby guy. The other two were great big monsters. They walked straight up to me.

I looked at these two big guys, who were what we called “goons” in those years. They were dressed in long black overcoats called “bermies.” I said, “What can I do for you?”

The short guy answered, “I’m here to settle the strike with Owens Illinois Glass.” At the time I was presenting the warehouse union in negotiations with that firm. I came back, “I have no authority to settle that strike. What is your interest in it?”

He said, “They used to supply me with bottles during Prohibition.” I asked, “What’s your name?” He said, “Waxie Gordon.” So I’m looking at this guy who I now realize is a notorious Chicago gangster. I didn’t know what the hell was going to happen. I offered, “Do you want me to arrange a meeting with the union?” No, he didn’t want that. “I’ll be in your office tomorrow if there’s anything you want.” And they left.

Interestingly, Harry thought we should take the master contract all along. He sided with, for christsake, Adrien Falk, one of the main employers. We had a public meeting with the world there and both of them were arguing for the master contract. We used to call them, in fun, “the Bridges/Falk axis” after the Hitler/Mussolini Axis. Anyway, from the beginning Harry said, “You guys are going to have to agree to a master contract.” And so we did. We also got some decent concessions in the arbitration proceedings that settled the details of the master contract in 1935.

Around this time the ILWU boycotts were bad news for the employers trying to get the ILWU to arbitrate discharge cases. The employers wouldn’t agree to that. The other issue was the unions wanting to have the closed shop, which was legal in those years. A closed shop meant that only union members could be employed in a plant.

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Schwarzenegger vetoes trucker bill

By Tom Price

PORT TRUCKERS lost a round in their efforts to get a voice in the contract negotiations that would affect their working conditions and wages when Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger vetoed a bill that would have created a new union role and would have formed a coordinated labor movement among the port owner-operator drivers to negotiate with the maritime shippers.

The legislation, Senate Bill 484, introduced Feb. 2, would have allowed California truck drivers to unionize and pursue collective bargaining with maritime shippers. It was introduced by Sen. Mark Leno, D-San Francisco, that would have taken the place of the Teamsters’ Port Division. “If it has anything to do with labor and there’s an objection—it’s an automatic veto.”

The steamship companies that contract with the truckers have a history of trying to keep the truckers from organizing, and the Teamsters have been working for years to get the owners and the state didn’t need to get into a fight over it. The bill passed the Senate 24-14 and the Assembly 47-31. Schwarzenegger vetoed it Sept. 29. The bill had the backing of the Teamsters’ Union and the opposition of the Calif. Trucking Assn.

“If it’s typical Schwarzenegger—if anyone in the business community objects to legislation, he’s going to veto it,” said Chandler, Chair of CTFTW. The Shop stewards, according to Hoffa, Change to Win and the union president emphasized would be a small, coordinating body, would mediate and direct multi-union organizing campaigns, and multi-union support for each other’s organizing drives, strikes and other action.

• Creating coordinating committees for organizing and bargaining in the specific core industries. The panels would develop joint plans and enforce provisions to ban individual carriers from reaching contracts that undercut their colleagues’ efforts.

• Nationwide organizing of national targets, including DHL, Wal-Mart, Cintas, Smithfield, FedEx and possibly the Beverly Nursing Home chain. The Change to Win 10-person council—each union’s president plus an additional member each, for diversity, from SEIU, the Teamsters and UFW—will set more targets and flesh out plans at a Nov. 1 meeting in Washington, D.C.

• Using actions, including strikes, in other cities or metro areas to support demands for recognition and contracts in one area.

• Downgrading political action to line campaigns, and endorsing only politicians who openly support the right to organize—even if those pols oppose labor on other issues.

• Using of labor’s financial resources, such as money in health, welfare and pension funds, to further union organizing goals. Laborers Union President Terry O’Sullivan said that includes $200 million in so-called “Taft-Hartley” pension funds in the construction industry, and $2.6 billion in public employee pensions.

• Making the areas of Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama devastated by Hurricane Katrina a test case for a new union role, not just immediate relief, but training area workers to rebuild communities. “It’s an opportunity to present ourselves in the South,” where the labor movement is weak and many unions under national contracts, such as IBT master freight agreements, have lower wages, Hoffa said.

• Using the three-fourths of the $16 million that Change to Win will collect in per-capita assessments from member unions for planning and implementing joint organizing.

Change to Win leaders confirmed contacts with other unions about joining their new federation, but said they are not actively soliciting them. A prime target mentioned was the unaffiliated 2.7-million-member National Education Association, the nation’s largest union. Asked specifically if NEA would be asked to join, SEIU President Andrew Stern said, “We’ll re-introduce the bill, the we’ll get it passed and, when we get a new governor, we will get it signed.”
LEAD seminar focuses on democracy and participation

Northern California members discuss strategy: Cesar Garibay and Jose Nunez (Local 6), Bonnie Houston (seated) and Byron Moore (Local 10), and Jack Wyatt, Sr., Local 17.

ILWU members from all sections of the union gathered in Palm Springs, California, last month to participate in the latest Leadership Education and Development (LEAD) institute.

“This is the most diverse and representative group of participants we’ve had come out for this type of training,” said ILWU International Secretary-Treasurer Willie Adams. The 85 participants, including 23 women, came from all industries and regions under the union’s jurisdiction to spend the week of Sept. 19-23 at the Riviera Resort learning about “the Tools and Traditions of Democracy” in the ILWU—which focused on how to run efficient, productive, and democratic membership meetings. Special attention was also paid to building personal skills in achieving effective decision-making and maximum member participation in the life of the union.

“What we are about in the ILWU,” said International President Jim Spinosa in his opening remarks, “is democracy—rank and file democracy from the bottom up in the ILWU and throughout organized labor. From real democracy we build real unity.”

The week-long program began with an overview by Professor Elaine Bernard of the Harvard University Trade Union Program about the importance of union democracy to members—and about how essential unions are in fighting democracy to members—and about how unions can work better together in committees and meetings, and why rules are necessary in a democracy. Max Vekich, member of clerks Local 52 and the International Executive Board, presided over a lively session on Robert’s Rules of Order and other ILWU meeting procedures.

Skill-building sessions took place between several presentations about ILWU principles and traditions. Pensioner and former Coast Committeeman Bill Ward and Ian Ruskin of the Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies led group problem-solving exercise.

Participants exchange insights and experiences about challenges of working constructively with different kinds of personalities in their union and community (foreground, back to camera, Tony Flaherty [Local 7] and Rachel Loshe [Local 56]; left to right Marc Cuevas [Local 54], Karen Bonkoski [Local 5], Angel Blanco [Local 13], Jerry LeMaster [Alaska Longshore Division]).

University of Washington Professor David Olson delivers main presentation about trends in member participation in the ILWU as members of his research team from the UW Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies look on (Ali Boyd, Julianna Rigg; not shown: Jon Agnone).

Talking about organizing in the Puget Sound area: Lance Anderson (Local 23 Tacoma), Chuck Cepeda (Local 19 Seattle), IBU national Secretary-Treasurer Terry Mast, Jeff Moore (Local 98 Seattle), Coast Committeeman (Northwest) Joe Wenzl.

Emilei Noceti, Local 63 Marine Clerks, leads group problem-solving exercise.

Participants exchange insights and experiences about challenges of working constructively with different kinds of personalities in their union and community (foreground, back to camera, Tony Flaherty [Local 7] and Rachel Loshe [Local 56]; left to right Marc Cuevas [Local 54], Karen Bonkoski [Local 5], Angel Blanco [Local 13], Jerry LeMaster [Alaska Longshore Division]).
October 2005

BUILDING THE COAST COMMUNICATIONS TEAM
LONGSHORE COMMUNICATIONS SEMINAR IN JANUARY

During our Longshore Division’s 2002 contract negotiations, the media became a key factor in influencing the public opinion of the community, labor, business interests and politicians. What people said about our negotiations impacted the contract bargaining process and how the politicians reacted to our contract struggle. Based on this reality, the Coast Committee, with recommendation from the Coast Public Relations Committee and approval from the Longshore Division Caucus, has committed to improving our communications program. A fundamental and critical aspect of this program is to form an ILWU Coast communications team that, under the direction of the local officers and Coast Committee, assists the ILWU in promoting its messages during the 2008 contract bargaining sessions and beyond.

On Monday, January 23 through Friday, January 27, 2005, the ILWU Coast Committee, in conjunction with the East Coast Public Relations Committee, will conduct a Communications seminar in Palm Springs, California at the Riviera Hotel. This seminar will include as instructors labor communication professionals with expertise in areas such as public speaking (press conferences, community meetings, outreach), print media (writing flyers, newsletters, press releases), audio/visual presentations (video and photographic), and e-activism (using e-mail and the internet to network, mobilize, and disseminate information).

APPLICATION PROCESS

The Coast Committee is looking for registered ILWU members who are committed to promoting the message of the ILWU and who will make a three-year commitment to the ILWU Coast Communications team. Registered rank-and-file longshore members interested in becoming part of the team can pick up applications from their local officers. Applicants must turn in one copy to their local president and send one copy separately to: The ILWU Coast Committee, 1188 Franklin Street, 4th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94102. Application deadline: November 21, 2005.

SELECTION PROCESS

With the advice of local officers and the Coast Public Relations Committee, the Coast Committee will select members to participate in the seminar for eligibility on the ILWU Coast Communications team (requests for additional member participation will be considered based on space availability).

ROOM ACCOMMODATIONS, TRAVEL, PER DIEM

The Coast Committee will provide room accommodations, reimbursement for travel and per diem. Locals may choose to pay wages at their own discretion.

BUILDING THE COAST COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

THE ILWU INTERNATIONAL OFFICERS WOULD LIKE TO THANK ALL THE MEMBERS WHO DONATED THEIR TIME, ENERGY AND MONEY TO OUR 2004 POLITICAL ACTION FUND (PAF). THE PURPOSE OF THIS FUND IS TO MAKE EXPENDITURES IN FEDERAL AND/OR LOCAL ELECTIONS TO PROTECT AND ADVANCE THE INTERESTS OF ILWU MEMBERS AND THE ENTIRE ILWU COMMUNITY.

THE CONSTITUENT REQUESTED IS VOLUNTARY AND IS SEPARATE FROM YOUR UNION DUES AND IS NOT A CONDITION OF MEMBERSHIP. YOU MAY GIVE MORE OR LESS THAN THE AMOUNT REQUESTED AND THERE WILL BE NO REPRISALS IF YOU GIVE LESS THAN THE REQUESTED AMOUNT. YOUR CONTRIBUTION IS NOT TAX DEDUCTIBLE.

PLEASE FILL OUT THE ATTACHED FORM AND SEND IT WITH A CHECK TO THE ILWU ACCOUNTS PAYABLE DEPARTMENT, THE ILWU DOCKSIDE HEADQUARTERS, 1188 FRANKLIN STREET 4TH FLOOR, SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102.

Since 1946, the ILWU has been involved in action and legislation which addresses our collective bargaining agreements, the ILWU’s current contracts and beyond. The ILWU was instrumental in blockading Bush’s continuing anti-workers agenda.

The ILWU International Officers would like to thank all the members who donated their time, energy and money to our 2004 political action campaign. The ILWU made in opposition to the Bush administration. Although we did not prevail then, events of the last year have proven us right and polls show that the majority of Americans now agree with our position. All those who contributed to our Political Action Fund in 2004 will be receiving a commemorative pin and window decal (pictured above) acknowledging their participation.

Now we are gearing up for the 2006 election cycle. The Republicans are vulnerable as the Iraq War drags on with continuing carnage and costs and no end in site, as Bush strategist Karl Rove appears to be facing indictments, and as Republican Senate leader Bill Frist and Republican House Majority Leader Rep. Tom DeLaey are facing criminal charges. We stand a chance next year of stripping them of their hold on the Senate or House or both and block Bush’s continuing anti-workers agenda.

But to do that will require another all-out effort, even more than we did in 2004. We will need all our members to contribute financially as well as be ready to volunteer in our campaign efforts as the election approaches. Please fill out the attached form and send it with a check to:

ILWU Political Action Fund
1188 Franklin Street 4th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94109

All contributors will receive the new 2006 Political Action Fund commemorative pin. Contributions from outside the ILWU’s solicitable class will be screened and returned.

THANKS!!!
continue to pursue picket captain and IBU member Robert Irminger and try to force him to name others on the line. After Bay Area longshore locals shut down the Port of Oakland July 25, rallied in front of the PMA’s Oakland office and marched 1,000 strong to the courthouse demanding the charges be dropped, and the Coast Committee threatening coastwise action if PMA carried out the prosecution of Irminger, the employ-
ers gave in.

The Labor Video Project produced the video. Following the video showing, Steve Zeltzer of the LVP, chaired the event with Irminger and Heyman speaking, followed by discussion. Irminger chronicled how the Neptune Jade sailed into the port of Oakland Sept. 28, 1997 from Thanesport, England, a port operated by Mersey Docks and Harbor Company which had sacked the 500 Liverpool dockers. It was the second anniversary of the strike. Labor and community activists set up a picket line in solidar-
ity with the Liverpool dockers. At this 10th anniversary commemoration Liverpool, steward Terry Teague pres-
tented Irminger with a plaque for his dedication to the struggle.

For three-and-a-half days long-
shore workers refused to cross the picket line, despite a court injunction ordering them to do so. Finally the Neptune Jade, desperate to unload its cargo in a U.S. West Coast port but finding no safe haven, departed for Vancouver, Canada, another ILWU port. Labor activists across the bor-
der also set up a picket, forcing the Neptune Jade to sail for Japan. There Japanese dockworkers, well aware of the hot cargo on board, didn’t touch the ship. Finally the ship sailed to Taiwan where the cargo was discharged and the Neptune Jade, now internationally notorious, was renamed.

Such power of coordinated action by workers in three different coun-
tries sent shivers down the spine of maritime companies around the globe. The website of the Neptune Jade Defense Committee was swamped by visits from global corporations fearful of the specter of labor solidarity.

At the Longshore Cau-
cushed after the ILWU Convention in Portland in 2000, attorney Rob Remar, who was instrumental in helping to pilot the Neptune Jade campaign through legal channels, explained that we live in a country with repressive anti-labor legislation like the Taft-Hartley Act which makes solidarity actions, or as employers say, “secondary boycotts,” difficult for unions to organize. “The significance of the Neptune Jade action lay in the fact that the ILWU was able to implement its policy of support for their Liverpool brothers while defending itself against legal attacks,” he said.

At the Liverpool gathering Irminger pointed out how the Neptune Jade action influenced later events. “It was the Neptune Jade action which strengthened the links between Bay Area organized labor and com-

munity groups, preceding and laying the foundations for a global justice move-
ment here,” he said.

In 1999, he pointed out, ILWU and other trade unions marched with young protesters demonstrat-
ing against the WTO in Seattle. And again, in 2001, global justice activists successfully picketed an Italian ship in the Port of Oakland to protest the killing of a young anti-capitalist global-
ization protester in Genoa.

Jack Heyman, who had been sent to Liverpool by then-ILWU President Brian McWilliams early in their strugg-
le in 1996, drew a direct connection from Liverpool to the Neptune Jade to the ILWU’s contentious 2002 contract negotiations and the anti-Iraq War protests. When PMA and the Bush administration threatened the ILWU during the 2002 contract negotiations, he said, these activists and dock-
workers internationally were readily mobilized to support the ILWU from marches and rallies in San Francisco to parrying with right-wing politicians in the Australian press.

Heyman said that anti-war activists demonstrated in the Port of Oakland at the start of the Iraq War, longshore workers refused to cross their picket lines as they had done six years earlier in the Neptune Jade picket line. One difference, he noted, was that Oakland mayor Jerry Brown himself participated in the Neptune Jade picket, but he now supports the bloody police repression of the anti-
war demonstration.

The veil of 9/11 “national secu-

rity,” had been used by the govern-
ment to cover the peaceful protesters as “terrorists.” Scores were shot with so-called less-than-lethal weapons, including nine longshore workers and then-Business Agent Heyman was arrested while trying to protect his members against the police assault. Although the port was not shut down, the case against the police, ILWU Local 10 v City of Oakland, is sched-
uled for court in January.

—Dispatcher staff reports

“Solidarity Has No Borders: the Journey of the Neptune Jade” is available for $20 (plus $5 handling fee) from its producer: Labor Video Project P.O. Box 729027 San Francisco, CA 94172 Voice: 415-262-1908 / Fax: 415-668-1389 Email: lvpaf@laborsnet.org

Fifty percent of the proceeds will go to the legal defense campaign to expose the brutal police attack on peaceful anti-war protesters and long-

shore workers in the Port of Oakland in April 2005. The campaign is being organized by the Transport Workers Solidarity Committee.

Jeff Smith recognized

As political activist

ILWU Columbia River District Council President Jeff Smith (center) received the Pat Quigley Award for outstanding contributions to labor’s politi-
cal program at the Oregon AFL-CIO Convention in Portland Oct. 18.

Pat Quigley was a longtime member and president of Asbestos Workers Local 36 and a political activist. He died several years ago from liver cancer at the age of 52. The Oregon AFL-CIO established an award in his memory to be given to a union member active in politics. The award was pre-

presented by Tim Nesbitt, President of the Oregon AFL-CIO (left) and Brad Witt, Secretary-Treasurer of the Oregon AFL-CIO (right).

In making the presentation Nesbitt said Smith deserved the award for his never-say-die enthusiasm and tireless commitment to Oregon’s union movement, for feeding hundreds of Labor 2004 volunteers, for fueling the federation’s best-ever political mobilization in 2004 and for always being there for his brothers and sisters on the front.

The Neptune Jade not being worked at the Port of Oakland.
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. **$5.00**

The **Big Strike** By Mike Quin: the classic partisan account of the 1934 strike. **$6.50**

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**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. DVD or VHS version **$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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