

International Longshore and Warehouse Union  
Thirty-fifth International Convention  
San Diego, California  
June 4 – 8, 2012

M/S/C/U  
6/5/12 am

Resolution # R-12

ORGANIZING THE GENERAL TRADES IN HAWAII

WHEREAS: ILWU Local 142 has its origins on the docks with the organizing of longshoremen in Hilo by ILWU pioneers like Harry Kamoku; and

WHEREAS: like their ILWU brothers and sisters on the West Coast, Hawaii ILWU members and leaders like Jack Hall realized that growing the Union required expanding into other industries; strength lies in numbers and a good number of workers in what was then the Territory of Hawaii did not yet have the benefit of unionism; and

WHEREAS: implementing its own Hawaii “March Inland,” the ILWU in Hawaii sought to organize agricultural workers and got a law passed in 1945 to mirror the National Labor Relations Act to allow field workers to join a union; and

WHEREAS: from less than 1,000 members when the ILWU was first formed in Hawaii, union membership grew to almost 33,000 by 1946 when the Great Sugar Strike challenged the Big Five and brought dignity and respect for agricultural workers, who were mostly immigrant and lacked formal education but were smart, militant, organized, and understood the value of being a union member; and

WHEREAS: the ILWU continued its Hawaii “March Inland,” organizing non-agricultural workers in what has become known as the “General Trades,” a catch-all phrase for the miscellaneous companies with ILWU contracts; organizing in tourism, the largest industrial grouping in Local 142, followed soon thereafter; and

WHEREAS: today, General Trades members represent more than one-third of Local 142’s total membership; and

WHEREAS: they work in manufacturing, hospitals, cemeteries, supermarkets, automotive shops, construction, credit unions, and in many other companies that touch almost every facet of commerce in Hawaii; and

WHEREAS: yet there are many more workers who could benefit from being members of a union; while union density in Hawaii is the third highest in the nation (behind New York and Alaska), almost 80% of workers in Hawaii do not have the benefit of a union contract and union representation; and

WHEREAS: many workers in Hawaii are employed by small companies (about 98% of businesses in Hawaii are identified as small), which are more challenging to organize because small business profitability may also be small; but the value of union representation and a union contract needs to be spread to all workers; and

WHEREAS: the diversity of the General Trades grouping in Local 142 signifies the growth of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union; from longshore to warehouses to sugar and pineapple to General Trades to tourism, ILWU organizing has reached out to unorganized workers in varied industries; and

WHEREAS: with organizing success, the ILWU will remain a significant force in the American labor movement; THEREFORE BE IT

RESOLVED: that the 35th Convention of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union supports organizing beyond traditional boundaries to bring the benefits of unionism to workers in all industries.