The Coast Longshore Division Caucus convened for historic meeting in Panama

The Coast Longshore Division Caucus convened from April 18-22 in Panama City, Panama. This historic meeting was the first Longshore Caucus to meet outside of the United States or Canada. More than 100 caucus delegates, fraternal delegates, and pensioners attended the Caucus.

“The Panama Canal Division is an important part of the ILWU family. We are here to show our support for the workers in this new division,” said ILWU International President Robert McEllrath.

The Panama Canal Division was formed by a unanimous motion at the 2012 ILWU Convention. Discussions about the possible affiliation began in 2002 when International Vice President Ray Familathe explored the issue. In 2010, President McEllrath and Vice President Familathe began talking about formal affiliation with Londor Rankin, General-Secretary of the Panama Canal Pilots Union. Today, the Panama Canal Division includes 250 members of the Panama Canal Pilots and 2,580 dock workers from SINTRAPORSPA, the Union of Dockworkers in the Ports of Balboa and Cristobal.

Warm welcome
On the first day of the Caucus, General-Secretary Rankin of the Panama Canal Pilots Unit welcomed the delegates. Rankin introduced the vocal group “The Three Divas” who sang a cappella versions of the Panamanian and American national anthems.

“In 2010, President McEllrath and Vice President Familathe began talking about formal affiliation with Londor Rankin, General-Secretary of the Panama Canal Pilots Union. Today, the Panama Canal Division includes 250 members of the Panama Canal Pilots and 2,580 dock workers from SINTRAPORSPA, the Union of Dockworkers in the Ports of Balboa and Cristobal.

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“We gather here to strengthen the strategic alliance between our unions and to send a loud and clear message to our counterparts that we continue to be united and grow stronger regardless of our nationality,” said Rankin. “We know we are not alone in the struggle to improve the wages and conditions for all of our members. We are proud to be among you, and we are honored that you have chosen Panama as the place for your Caucus.”

Several Panamanian media outlets published articles about the historical significance of the ILWU Coast Longshore Division’s first Caucus in Panama. The publication, Panama On reported in Spanish, and the translation is: “This meeting, which is the first to take place in Panama, aims to reaffirm the existing strategic alliance between these two unions, which is mainly based on the noble principle of international solidarity, continued on page 4”
One enjoyable way to honor them is by reading a good labor history book, such as Building the Golden Gate Bridge. It’s a collection of worker oral histories by Harvey Schwartz, published by the University of Washington Press. A review of the book can be found in the March issue of The Dispatcher.

Dear Editor,

I received my Longshoreman’s book in 1967 and was a longtime member of Local 18 in Sacramento. I also worked in every west coast port and became experienced with our industry. We are respected because our union is strong – and also because the employer made money along with employees.

Now you want me to vote for Bernie Sanders, a socialist who will penalize successful people. Bernie’s way will cost everyone more and I think he will bankrupt the USA. ILWU members earned our benefits – but are you willing to pay for someone who didn’t earn them? That isn’t the American way.

It is often said that Harry Bridges, who helped found the ILWU, was also a socialist. I met Bridges when I was a Local 18 officer. It was my impression that he wanted benefits for the members of our union, but not for workers in other unions or citizens at large. I think socialist ideology works for an industry or a union, but not for a government.

U.S. businesses need to make money, and not go bankrupt supporting people who want a free hand-out.

Richard Wilkie, Local 18 Pensioner
Sacromento, CA

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Attention Local 10 members: Smolin-Melin Scholarship Application Deadline

Trustees of the Smolin-Melin Scholarship Fund are prepared to accept applications for scholarships for the academic year 2016-2017. Now is the time to indicate your interest. June 1, 2016 is the application deadline.

Victor Smolin and Carlton Melin were long time members of Local 10. They left a sum of money to establish the scholarship fund. They specified that scholarships would be available to children of Class A Local 10 members to further their “collegiate” education. Trustees of the Fund interpret “members” to mean active members in good standing at the time of disbursement of scholarship funds, deceased members and retired members. The Trustees interpret “collegiate” to apply only to full-time study (at least 12 units per semester or quarter) at either a four-year college or an academic junior college.

The Trustees have agreed that (1) no applicant will be awarded more than four scholarships, (2) a fifth scholarship would be considered after careful review of the applicant’s record and if circumstances warrant and (3) in no event would an applicant be considered for a sixth scholarship.

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

Trustees are Beth Ross, counsel for ILWU Local 10; Harry Bridges, a retired member of Local 10 and a friend of Victor Smolin, and Eugene Vrana, retired Director of Educational Services and Librarian for ILWU.

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

To request an application, simply call Nicole Bridges at (415) 771-6400 or email her at nbridges@leonardcarder.com. She will then send you the application form with the necessary explanatory material.

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MAY IS MEDICAL, DENTAL PLAN CHOICE MONTH

Active and retired longshore families in the ports where members have a choice can change medical and dental plans during the Open Enrollment period from May 1 to May 31, 2016. Any changes made will be effective July 1, 2016. In addition to the May Open Enrollment period members may change their medical plan and/or dental plan once at any time during the Plan Year (July 1-June 30).

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First Blood memorial: The ILWU Southern California Pensioners held their 14th annual First Blood memorial on May 16th in San Pedro’s John Gibson Park. The ceremony honored Dickie Parker and John Knudsen, the first workers killed during the 1934 West Coast Strike that led to the formation of the ILWU. Parker, a 20-year-old San Pedro High School graduate was killed during a May 15, 1934 melee between dock workers and company-paid strikebreakers. Knudsen died on June 5, 1934 as a result of injuries he sustained in that battle.

The event also paid tribute those ILWU brothers and sisters who have been killed on the docks throughout the years. John Gibson Park contains a memorial listing ILWU longshore workers killed on the job. Sadly, two names have been added to honor Local 13 members Rochelle Taylor and Local 63 member Anthony Harris who were killed earlier this year.

ILWU International Vice President Ray Familathe spoke at the event along with Pacific Coast Pensioner President Greg Mitre. ILWU Local 13 President Bobby Olivera, Jr., also attended the ceremony.

Southern California Pensioner and Poet Laureate, Jerry Brady, read a poem tribute to the fallen.

In the photo above: On the left, PCPA President Greg Mitre speaks at the memorial. On the right, Vice President Familathe gave the keynote address at the memorial service. He said that the event was an important reminder that that working on the waterfront is dangerous and that the safety of ILWU members continues to be the top priority of the Coast Longshore Division.
Coast Longshore Division Caucus convenes for historic meeting in Panama

Continued from page 1

which has come in handy in the struggles of workers around the world, in this case, in the maritime port sector.”

Later that night, the Panama Canal Pilots hosted a dinner for the delegates at their union hall, where caucus delegates had an opportunity to meet with members of the Panama Canal Division. Later in the week, the Panama Canal Pilots hosted a dinner at the Miraflores Locks, demonstrating the 103-year-old lock operations viewable from an outdoor deck reserved for ILWU Coast Longshore Division guests.

Caucus dedications

The Caucus was dedicated in the memory of a number of individuals who have recently passed including Ralph Rooker (Local 10-retired), Hugh Hunter (Local 13-retired), Jesus Puga (Local 13-retired), Gordon Neely (Local 19), Robert Stevens (Local 19), Dale Martinis (Local 19), Jarret Van Curen (Local 19), Richard Cavalli (Local 34-retired), Emile Lewis (Local 34), Donja Grant (Local 34), Jim Crest (Local 40-retired), Bill Hatle (Local 63), Anthony Harris, Jr. (Local 63), Domenick Miretti (Local 63-retired), John Vlac (Local 94-retired), William Kendall (Local 98), and Oliver Pickford (Local 98-retired).

Safety, technology, training, and political action

The Caucus dealt with a range of issues facing the industry and union members, including the impact of megaships on port congestion and port infrastructure, automation, registration, safety, training, contract administration and jurisdiction. As election season heats up for the US presidential and congressional races, political action was also a high priority for the Caucus. A resolution was passed to motivate members to contribute to the ILWU’s Political Action Fund, and money was allocated for the 2016 Political Action Program.

PMA’s contract extension request

In March 2016, the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) sent President McEllrath a request to discuss an extension of the 2014-2019 Longshore Contract. President McEllrath submitted this request to the ILWU Coast Longshore Division Caucus and the issue was discussed. In keeping with the ILWU Coast Longshore Division’s democratic process, the Caucus has submitted the matter to the membership for review and input before taking any official action.

ILWU send off

The Caucus honored ILWU Canada President Mark Gordienko, who is retiring at the end of his current term. The Caucus also paid tribute to Southern California Coast Director and ADRP Representative Jackie Cummings, who is also retiring.

SINTRAPORS PA members visit

Alberto Ochoa, Secretary General of SINTRAPORS PA, which represents more than 2,580 longshore workers in the Port of Balboa in Panama and is affiliated with the Panama Canal Division, spoke at the Caucus. “We are grateful to you because you played a key role in the organization of SINTRAPORS PA,” Ochoa said.

In keeping with the tradition of warm Latin American greetings, Ochoa said he brought a “fraternal hug” for all in attendance and said, “We are honored that you chose to have this meeting in Panama.”

Interview with Londor Rankin, General Secretary, Panama Canal Division

What is the significance of holding this Longshore Caucus in Panama for the Panama Canal Division?

Having the Caucus here in Panama is historic. It means a lot to us. We are sending a strong message to our counterparts that we are not alone. We have big brothers—the ILWU—and that the ILWU can count on the little brothers from Panama. It also set an example for other unions in Panama.

We have learned a lot from the ILWU, and we hope that we can teach ILWU members something in return. We know that the ILWU is a union that has a lot of respect for the rank and file members and belongs to the members. That’s what I have witnessed and that’s the way we carry out our business as well.

Is there any new about the Panama Canal Pilots you can share with the readers of the Dispatcher?

It was a happy coincidence that this Caucus could be held in Panama so close to the opening of the new expansion.

The pilots have some challenges with the new set of locks in the canal expansion. It’s a new way of taking the ships through the locks. They are bigger vessels. They are not going to use any locomotives to move from chamber to chamber. So that is going to be a learning process.
Bernie Sanders’ decisive May 17 primary victory in Oregon was preceded by a May 3rd rally in Portland’s Shemanski Park that attracted more than 750 union members and community supporters. The rally was initially planned by Local 8 member Jeff Smith to be held at the Local 8 hall, but moved it to the park because of growing interest and the bigger crowd that came to the event. 

ILWU officers at the rally including ILWU International President Rob- ert McEllrath, ILWU International Vice President (Hawaii) Wesley Furtado and President Alan Coté of the Inland-boatmen’s Union (IBU).  

Union solidarity 
Unions represented at the rally included, the ILWU, the IBEW, Communications Workers of America, Amalgamated Transit Union, the National Nurses United and the Postal Workers Union. 

Political leadership 
Bernie Sanders was not able to appear at the rally but Oregon Demo- cratic Sen. Jeff Merkley and Representa- tive Tulsi Gabbard (D-Hawaii) spoke at the event. They highlighted issues that have mobilized millions of Americi- cans to support the Sanders campaign: opposition to so called “free trade” deals like NAFTA, CAFTA and the TPP that have devastated workers, end- ing mass incarceration of poor people and people of color, climate change, the lack of Wall Street regulations and a campaign finance system that leaves working people virtually voiceless in the political process. 

Vice President Furtado introduced Congresswoman Gabbard at the event. She thanked her for the strong support she has given the ILWU in Hawaii and for her commitment to the working men and women of Hawaii. 

Smith said there was a strong turn- out from ILWU members at the event, including people who traveled from Seattle and the Bay Area to attend. 

Sanders’ overwhelming support in Oregon was confirmed when he scored a 12-point victory margin on Election Day – and set the stage for a showdown in California’s June 7 primary.

So Cal Organizes 
Southern California ILWU Locals geared-up for their final month of outreach and educational work before the June 7 primary election with a campaign-kickoff event for ILWU vol- unteers on May 5 that was attended by 100 volunteers, including members, pensioners and family – plus communi- ty leaders and special guests from other unions. 

Southern California Pensioners Group President Greg Mitre served as Master of Ceremonies. He was joined by SCDC President Cathy Familiarhe of Local 63, SCDC Legislative Repre- sentative Floyd Bryan of Local 13, and former ILWU International President David Arian who now serves on the Port Commission. 

“We have four weeks to contact and educate ILWU members about Bernie Sanders before the election,” said Greg Mitre on May 5. “We need to make sure everyone we know is informed and registered to vote.” 

On May 17, Bernie came to the Stub Hub Center in Carson where an estimated 20,000 supporters filled the stadium for a supercharged evening rally. Local 13 President Bobby Olvera, Jr., joined other ILWU officers and pensioners who attended the big event. 

“The diversity of the crowd showed his support crosses racial, gender and socioeconomic lines,” said Olvera, Jr. “He reminded us that a great country requires dignity and security for all our citizens – not just luxuries for the one- percent and corporations.”

Nor Cal Outreach 
ILWU Local 6 is serving as a hub for the Northern California District Council’s outreach effort. A mobiliza- tion on Saturday, May 21 sent volun- teers out to Bay Area neighborhoods where they contacted ILWU members about Bernie Sanders. 

Bernie’s CA buzz 
On May 18, Bernie Sanders appeared at three Northern Califor- nia locations, beginning in San Jose where he was met by a large crowd that included many union members. In the afternoon, he joined a rally in downtown San Francisco to sup- port hundreds of hotel workers and custodians.

“We need to grow the unions in our country so that workers can negotiate fair contracts, fair wages, and fair working conditions,” Sand- ers told more than 1,000 supporters who jammed downtown streets in the financial district. 

Among those marching in San Francisco were members of Local 6 and Local 10. 

The day concluded with an early evening rally at Waterfront Park in Vallejo, a working-class community that’s been hit hard by foreclosures and personal bankruptcies caused by the Wall Street financial crisis. 

Members of Local 6 and 10 attended the event that attracted more than 10,000 supporters who came on short notice. 

“The crowd was impressive and peace- ful,” said ILWU Coast Benefits Special- ist and Local 10 member John Cas- tanho. “He hit all the issues that ILWU members care about.” 

The June issue of The Dispatcher will include analysis of the California Primary, and next steps in the Presi- dential campaign.
Local 10 Drill Team members rolled out the red carpet to honor their longtime leader, “Captain Josh,” with a surprise party on April 30th that celebrated the Team’s 50th Anniversary.

Captain Josh was completely surprised and nearly speechless when he entered the OVO Tavern and Eatery in Oakland to discover the secret celebration was being held in his honor. “Drill Team members and their families just wanted to surround Captain Josh with all our love and appreciation for everything that he’s given to our union and the Drill Team,” said Local 10’s Sabrina Giles.

Giles co-hosted the event with Local 10’s Trevel Adanandus who owns the OVO Tavern and donated the cake, hired a photographer and produced the event’s backdrop. She thanked a hard-working team of volunteers including Dr. Drew, Lori Marchell, Marie Bacchus from the IBU, Local 10 Business Agent John Hughes, and all Local 10 members who helped pay part of the tab. A personalized cake with three “edible photos” honored the Drill Team’s 83-year-old leader.

Further honors came later in the evening when Drill Team members presented their leader with a certificate of appreciation, a large plaque and bestowed him with a new title – elevating the former “Captain” to “General” Josh Williams.

Williams, who rarely speaks at great length, said he was truly touched by all the honors and recognition. He thanked everyone for their generosity, then broke out with a special rendition of his “7th Street Song” that celebrates African American history in San Francisco, recalling life in the City’s Fillmore neighborhood, where barbecues and jazz joints flourished after the Second World War – along with a host of colorful street characters who are mostly now gone. When Williams finished his song, he was followed by more performers from the Drill Team ranks, including Janice Smith and Paul from ‘da Hall.

“As the long night of celebrating drew to a close, Williams was treated to a complimentary night in a nearby hotel, which spared him a late night drive across the Bay Bridge to his San Francisco home.

“I’m ready to have one of these younger people take over at some point,” said the General, “but I’ve still got more time until they’re ready to step up.”

Party with a purpose: Local 10’s Drill Team and friends celebrated the group’s 50 years of solidarity and union culture.

Drill Team Celebrates 50th Anniversary; founder Josh Williams honored at event

Top honors: Longtime Local 10 member and active pensioner Josh Williams was honored for founding and leading the famous ILWU Drill Team.

Party with a purpose: Local 10’s Drill Team and friends celebrated the group’s 50 years of solidarity and union culture.
Miembros del Local 6 celebraron su 69ª
Convención Anual

El Secretario Tesorero del Local 6, Fred Pecker, dijo que la convención generó muchas discusiones buenas pero le decepcionó el hecho de que no se aprobó ninguna resolución allí.

“Me gustaría reconocer las aportaciones de muchos antiguos afiliados y pensionistas que ayudaron a educar a algunos de los afiliados más nuevos del Local 6 acerca de la importancia de seguir las reglas y procedimientos de la convención.”

El Secretario Tesorero de San Francisco, “El Local 6 tiene una historia orgullosa y combativa y siempre es un honor para mi participar en sus convenciones,” dijo Adams. Recordó haber asistido a eventos especiales con LeRoy King en Pacific Heights, el barrio exclusivo de San Francisco. “LeRoy nunca se arreglaba para ir a aquellos eventos. Él siempre llevaba la chaqueta del Local 6, para representar a este sindicato y el lugar de dónde venía.”

Adams señaló algunas preguntas difíciles que le hicieron los participantes acerca del plan de pensiones, beneficia a una minoría de los 1,300 afiliados del Local 6, pero sigue siendo una prioridad para el sindicato. El fondo de pensiones es como muchos otros que se han visto afectados por el creciente número de “negocios fugitivos que han huido del norte de California y de Estados Unidos hacia países como México y China en los que se pagan salarios bajos. La huida de esas compañías durante los últimos diez años resultó en el 85% de la huelga y los pensionistas que ayudaron a educar a los trabajadores a trabajar en ese fondo de pensiones.

El Secretario Tesorero Internac.ional de ILWU, Willie Adams, también se dirigió a la convención. Señaló que el Local 6 siempre ha ocupado un lugar especial en su corazón porque tiene un gran estima en los antiguos líderes del Local 6, Lou Goldblatt y LeRoy King.

El Consejo de Representantes, convocó a sus delegados y 20 invitados a la 69ª Convención del Local 6, para representar a este sindicato y el lugar de dónde venía. "El Local 6 tiene una historia orgullosa y combativa y siempre es un honor para mi participar en sus convenciones," dijo Adams. Recordó haber asistido a eventos especiales con LeRoy King en Pacific Heights, el barrio exclusivo de San Francisco. “LeRoy nunca se arreglaba para ir a aquellos eventos. Él siempre llevaba la chaqueta del Local 6, para representar a este sindicato y el lugar de dónde venía.”

Adams comentó algunas preguntas difíciles que le hicieron los participantes acerca del plan de pensiones, beneficia a una minoría de los miembros del Local 6 amparados por el plan, son los responsables de tomar decisiones acerca de su fondo de retiro.

"No hay respuestas fáciles ni respuestas mágicas para la cuestión de las pensiones," dijo Bill Dow, un pensionista del Local 6. “Todos vamos a tener que hacer nuestra tarea y trabajar juntos si queremos resolver esto.”

La convención suspendió sus deliberaciones por la tarde después de que docenas de miembros se conocieron y convivieron al finalizar la reunión.

New Harbor Area Planning Commission: Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti recently appointed former Local 13 President Joe Cortez to serve on the City’s Harbor Area Planning Commission. Cortez is filling a one-year vacancy created by the resignation of former Commissioner Scott Lane. He was sworn-in on May 4th at Los Angeles City Hall by Michael Espinosa from the City Clerk’s office. “I feel honored and privileged to serve,” said Cortez.

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A Helping Hand...
...when you need it most. That's what we're all about. We are the representatives of the ILWU-sponsored recovery programs. We provide professional and confidential assistance to you and your family for alcoholism, drug abuse and other problems—and we're just a phone call away.

ILWU BOOKS & VIDEOS

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

BOOKS

Solidarity Stories: An Oral History of the ILWU. By Harvey Schwartz. An inspiring collection of first-hand accounts from ILWU union leaders and rank and file workers. $17.00.

A Spark Is Struck: Jack Hall & the ILWU in Hawaii. By Sanford Zalbarg. A high quality re-issue of the informative epic account of Jack Hall and the birth and growth of the ILWU in Hawaii $13.50 (paperback).

The Legacy of 1934: An historical exhibit by the ILWU. Produced as a catalogue to accompany the new travelling historical art exhibit about the origins of the ILWU in the 1934 maritime strike, brief but vivid publication stands on its own as a pictorial history of the coastwise strike and an account of the extraordinary sacrifices and democratic principles of the founding members of the union. Two (2) for $5.00

Harry Bridges: The Rise and Fall of Radical Labor in the United States. By Charles Larrowe. A limited number of copies of this out-of-print and useful biography are now available through the book sale by special arrangement with Boleroim Books in San Francisco, which specializes in rare publications and documents about radical and labor history. $10.00.

The ILWU Story. This book 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. $9.00

The Union Makes Us Strong: Radical Unionism on the San Francisco Waterfront. By David Wellman. The important new study of longshoreing in the ILWU. $20.00 (paperback)

The March Inland: Origins of the ILWU Warehouse Division 1934-1938. By Harvey Schwartz. A new edition of the only comprehensive account of the union's organizing campaign in the northern California warehouse and distribution industry. $9.00

VIDEOS

“Eye of the Storm: Our Fight for Justice and a Better Contract.” A 58-minute DVD feature documentary film produced and directed by Amie Williams, Eye of the Storm tells the story of the 2002 longshore lockout on the West Coast. DVD Version $5.00

“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 DVD of the original 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. DVD $5.00

Former Local 34 member Frank Silva joins veteran labor photojournalist and frequent contributor to the Dispatcher, David Bacon, in a photo exhibit at PhotoCentral in Hayward, CA June 4th through August 31st.