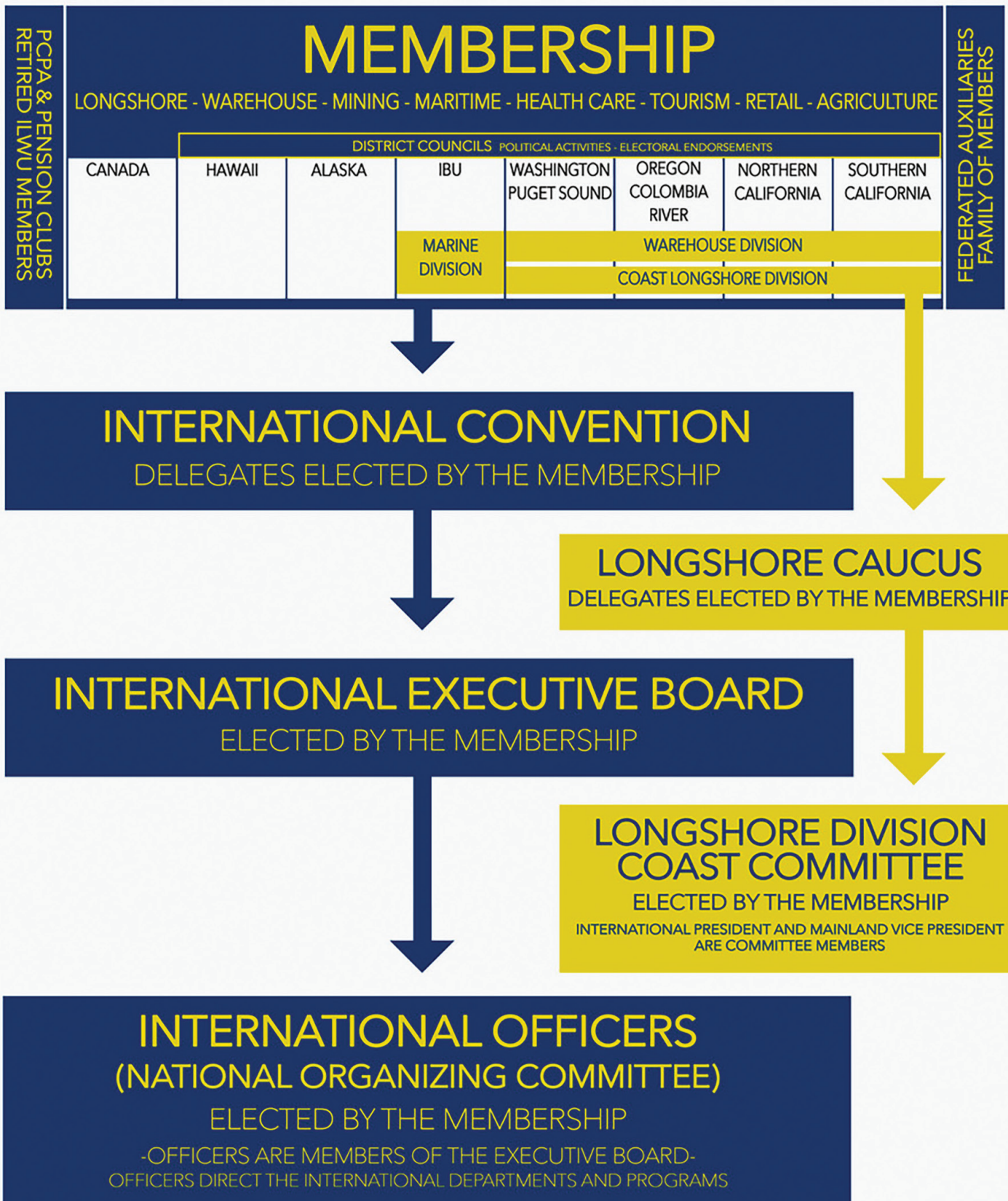


# How Our Union Works



**International Longshore & Warehouse Union**

# STRUCTURE OF OUR UNION



# The Structure of the International Longshore & Warehouse Union

**T**he International Longshore and Warehouse Union is made up of 40,000 members across more than 50 local unions in the states of California, Washington, Oregon, Alaska and Hawaii. 2,600 of these members belong to the Inlandboatmen's Union of the Pacific (IBU), the ILWU's Marine Division, and 5,500 belong to the autonomous ILWU Canada.

The foundation of the ILWU was laid with the 1934 West Coast Waterfront Strike, when 14,000 longshore workers struck coast-wide for 83 days, demanding an end to employer domination over the docks. The strikers demanded a worker-controlled hiring hall and a coastwide agreement with uniform wages and conditions for all ports. At the time of the strike, these

workers belonged to the Pacific Coast District of the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA). In 1937, after the successful organization of thousands of warehouse workers, locals up and down the coast voted to disaffiliate from the ILA and form a new union: the ILWU.

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## The ILWU's Membership and Local Unions

The ILWU is made up of people employed in several trades. Our members work in longshoring; on tugs, barges, and ferries; in warehouses and food processing facilities; in grocery stores; in tourism and hospitality; in agriculture; retail; mining; recycling; and a variety of other professions.

As a bottom-up union, the members are the ILWU. Officer elections and the ILWU's policies and priorities are determined through regular membership meetings, conventions, and referendum votes. For the ILWU, democracy is neither just a preference nor a lofty ideal. Union democracy — meaning rank-and-file power — is the fundamental element that makes the ILWU work and keeps the union strong.

Similarly, our longstanding tradition of local union autonomy helps preserve our bottom-up, rank-and-file democracy. But autonomy is not independence or separation. The whole of the ILWU is greater than the sum of its locals, and it is through coming together as one through districts, divisions, and the International that the ILWU finds its strength as a union.

Each local has its own constitution, which guarantees democratic procedures controlled by the rank-and-file, and spells out the duties of the various officers and committees. In general, most locals have one or more full-time elected officers, as well as a series of elected committees, including an executive board, a board of trustees to oversee the local's finances, and others such as publicity and education.

The locals set their own dues structure and pay per capita to the International. Locals make per capita payments at rates determined by individuals' rates of pay, with locals paying lower per capita for workers with lower rates of pay.

## The International Union

The ILWU International Convention is the union's highest governing body. The ILWU's first convention was held in 1938, where the union's internal structure was created, and later modified in 1945.

The ILWU International Convention is held every three years. The Convention is made up of delegates elected by their locals. Each local's delegation has a certain number of votes that is proportionate to the number of dues payers in that local.

The Convention adopts resolutions and statements of policy on economic, social, and other issues and may amend the ILWU's Constitution. The Constitution serves to "guide our conduct and protect our democracy within the union." It does this by defining the rights and responsibilities of ILWU members, affiliates, International Titled Officers, local unions, and decision-making bodies such as the International Executive Board (IEB).

The International Titled Officers and members of the IEB are nominated at the Convention and elected by secret mail-in ballots. The Titled Officers are President, Vice President (Mainland), Vice President (Hawaii) and Secretary-Treasurer. They run the day-to-day operations of the union and supervise its staff. The Titled Officers also make up the National Organizing Committee and are key members of various other committees.

The IEB is the highest governing body when the Convention is not in session and meets at least three times a year, with the full authority to take all actions necessary to implement the provisions of the Constitution and the decisions of the Convention.

## ILWU International Headquarters

Based in San Francisco, the “International” of the ILWU is made up of the Titled Officers, field staff, professional staff, and clerical workers. The International coordinates the ILWU’s divisions, regions, locals, and industrial/occupational groupings. It brings together the knowledge and experience of the membership to share with locals. This collective information helps locals with contract administration, organizing, and implementation of policy.

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The main role of the International is to support the locals and strengthen unity between the many diverse parts of the union. The work of the International is divided into departments such as Administration, Communications (including The Dispatcher), Research and Education, Organizing, and Legislative. Each department is overseen by the Titled Officers.

The departments do not and cannot impose policy or programs on the locals. Local autonomy in this context means that the locals are responsible for requesting and making use of resources and services from the International and for implementing ILWU programs.

The International’s organizers work closely with the locals in their areas to identify organizing targets and connect with workers to help them join the ILWU. Organizers are occasionally assigned to assist locals with internal organizing programs, contract campaigns, and negotiations.

## The Coast Longshore Division

The core of the union, historically, has been the Coast Longshore Division, which established the union through its victory in the 1934 West Coast maritime strike. In 1947, after other occupational groups began to charter with the ILWU, the first standalone longshore caucus was held, after which the Coast Longshore Division started to take shape. Today, the Coast Longshore Division is made up of approximately 30 longshore, clerk, and foremen locals.

The Coast Longshore Division is governed by the Longshore Caucus, whose delegates are elected by the members of the Coast Longshore Division locals. Each local has a number of votes at the Longshore Caucus determined by its number of registrants. The Longshore Caucus sets its own rules and procedures, and discusses the policy of the Coast Longshore Division.

The Coast Committee is the executive body of the Coast Longshore Division. It has four members: the ILWU International President and Vice President (Mainland), who are elected by the entire membership of the ILWU, with the condition that they must come from the Coast Longshore Division to serve on the Coast Committee, and two additional members called “Coast Committee members,” who are elected by the Coast Longshore Division locals. The Coast Committee is responsible for running the Coast Longshore Division day to day between caucuses.

Just as the Coast Longshore Division is autonomous within the ILWU, the Coast Longshore Division locals are autonomous within the Coast Longshore Division. These locals are responsible for their own day to day operation, for negotiating local agreements and working rules, and for making sure local employers abide by the master contracts.

One such master contract, which is a central document to the Coast Longshore Division, is the Pacific Coast Longshore and Clerks’ Agreement (PCL&CA), which is negotiated between the ILWU and the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA), an organization of multinational cargo carriers, terminal operators, and stevedore companies that operate in California, Oregon, and Washington. The PCL&CA establishes uniform rates of pay, hours of work, and benefits. The PCL&CA also defines the jurisdiction of longshore workers and marine clerks on the West Coast.

Another important purpose of the Longshore Caucus is to meet before PCL&CA contract negotiations to develop contract demands and elect a Negotiating Committee from the delegates to the Caucus. Following bargaining, if the Negotiating Committee reaches tentative agreement with the PMA employers, the Longshore Caucus will debate the tentative agreement and vote on it. If the Caucus votes it up, it is sent to registered longshore and clerk workers for a ratification vote. If the Caucus votes it down, it may call for a strike or send the Negotiating Committee back to the bargaining table.

The Coast Longshore Division is funded by the longshore, clerk, and foremen workers of the Coast Longshore Division locals, who pay dues to their locals.



## Warehouse Division

The ILWU Warehouse Division consists of workers in various industries and encompasses nearly all US mainland ILWU members outside of the Longshore and Marine divisions. Traditionally, the division's membership primarily worked in warehouses linked to the docks, cold storage, processing and freight handling.

During the 1934 strike, longshore workers knew they needed to shore up support from workers in the next link in the supply chain: warehouse workers. Following the success of the 1934 strike, this strategic assessment led the new union to embark on an aggressive organizing drive throughout the “up-town” warehouses that fed cargo to and from the docks.

From 1934-1938, this “March Inland” brought in thousands of warehouse workers and had a powerful impact on the entire union. This helped transform an older, more traditional union into the new “industrial union” that ultimately became the ILWU. Indeed, the March Inland was in full swing at the exact moment the ILWU formed in 1937 and the “W” reflects this history and the union's origins.

Today, the Warehouse Division includes several locals in California, Oregon, and Washington, with members in warehouses, production, food processing, mining, healthcare, retail, early childhood education, and many other industries. These locals negotiate their own contracts and have their own structures. Some Warehouse Division locals represent workers under a singular collective bargaining agreement, and others represent workers across multiple locations with various agreements. Additionally, many longshore locals also have separate allied units, and represent workers outside of the longshore division, who fall into the warehouse division.

The Warehouse Division is a vibrant and diverse part of the ILWU and has the potential for growth in both traditional supply chain industries as well as new and emerging sectors.

## Marine Division

The ILWU Marine Division began in 1981, when the Inlandboatmen's Union of the Pacific (IBU) affiliated with the ILWU. The IBU represents members who work on towboats, barges and ferries along the Pacific Coast, including deep-sea ports and inland waterways. The membership works in jobs in both the private and public sectors.

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The IBU is a “semi-autonomous” division of the ILWU, meaning they have their own constitution, conventions, and officers, but also participate in the larger ILWU structure and share resources with the rest of the union, including organizers and other staff. Members of the IBU elect two full-time officers (President and Secretary-Treasurer) as well as Regional Directors in Northern California, Southern California, Puget Sound, Columbia River, Alaska and Hawaii, who conduct their local affairs based on the IBU's own constitution and bylaws.

## The ILWU in Hawaii and Alaska

The vast majority of ILWU members in Hawaii belong to Local 142, which makes up approximately (30%) of the ILWU's total U.S. membership. Until the 1950s, there were many different locals throughout the Islands, but the membership voted to amalgamate into one large local union for more effective and efficient administration and representation. Today, each of the four major counties (Oahu, Hawaii, Maui and Kauai) has a Division Director to lead its union affairs.

Local 142 is organized into four industrial divisions: longshore, pineapple, tourism and general trades. Members of each division elect delegates to caucus-type bodies, which set demands, elect negotiating committees, and have their own procedures for the ratification of contracts and the conduct of strikes.

Hawaii longshore workers are organized under the Hawaii Longshore Division within Local 142. The Division leadership consists of a Division Director, Vice-Director, Secretary-Treasurer, and several unit chairs. Division members elect these titled officers and members of each unit elect the chairs.

The Hawaii Longshore Division negotiates their collective bargaining agreement with the Stevedore Industry Committee, an employer group consisting of shipping companies, terminal operators, and stevedore companies. A caucus of rank-and-file members determines their contract demands and the division membership elects a negotiating committee to bargain for an agreement that establishes uniform wages, health and welfare, and other provisions that apply to all longshore work within the Division's jurisdiction. Individual units negotiate certain contract supplements that apply to their specific workplaces.

The ILWU in Alaska represents longshore workers and public sector workers employed in healthcare. The Alaska longshore units are part of the Alaska

Longshore Division and the remainder of the units are with Local 200.

Longshore work across Alaska includes containers, bulk cargo and break bulk handling, and the loading and unloading of cruise ships. Jurisdiction, benefits, hours of work and wages are covered by the All Alaska Longshore Agreement. This contract is negotiated between the Division, Alaska maritime employers and individual stevedoring companies and shipping lines. The negotiating committee for the Division is elected by rank-and-file members throughout the state and is comprised of three Alaska Longshore Division titled officers and three regional committeemen.

## **ILWU Canada**

ILWU Canada consists of twelve locals with approximately 5,500 members working in longshore, office clerical, grain, pilotage, and maritime trades in British Columbia. They also have over 14,000 affiliates in the retail-wholesale, grain, and inland transport industries in BC, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. ILWU Canada maintains an affiliation with the Canadian Labour Congress.

ILWU Canada holds a national convention every two years. Delegates are elected by their local membership, and affiliates have a voice, but no vote, at the Convention. The convention sets ILWU Canada's policies and programs. It also nominates the national officers and executive board, who are then voted on by the membership via a referendum election.

The longshore workers in Canada's Pacific Coast ports are part of the ILWU Canada Longshore Division. The negotiating team is elected at the ILWU Canada Longshore Caucus and consists of representatives from each longshore local. The Canadian longshore contract is negotiated with the British Columbia Maritime Employers Association, an entity similar to the PMA. The contract is subject to Canadian laws that contain elaborate provisions for government

intervention in the bargaining process and other aspects of a legal structure very different from the United States.

## **Pensioners' Groups and Federated Auxiliaries**

Throughout the ILWU's history, the union has recognized the important contributions made by members' families and retired workers. When the union's workforce was nearly all men, women family members rallied to support the early struggles through their Auxiliaries. The International issues charters for individual Auxiliary chapters, and membership is open to immediate relatives of ILWU members. Through the years, ILWU Auxiliaries have built a lasting reputation for militant support of the union, especially during strikes and other industrial disputes.

Unlike the Auxiliaries, which are chartered under the ILWU Constitution, the various pensioners' groups exist independently of the ILWU, but are knit together under the Pacific Coast Pensioners Association (PCPA), or through regional bodies like the Hawaii State Pensioners Association.

Rules governing the participation of pensioners in the life of the ILWU are generally set by the constitutions and bylaws of the local unions from which the members are retired. Pensioners are not allowed to vote in ILWU International elections, but still play an active role in contract discussions, especially concerning changes to the pension plan and health & welfare.

Representatives of the Federated Auxiliaries and the PCPA are seated at the ILWU Convention as fraternal delegates, having voice but no vote on matters before the Convention.

## **District Councils**

There are District Councils in each area of the ILWU's geographical jurisdiction consisting of elected representatives from each affiliated local.

District Councils discuss local conditions and mutual problems that may

arise from time to time and advocate for ILWU issues within state, county, and city governments. District Councils submit recommendations for local, state, and federal endorsements to the International. They also discuss and coordinate support for contract fights, organizing drives, and other issues local unions are facing.

## **Legislative Committees & Political Action**

The ILWU has an International Legislative Committee comprised of members from the International Executive Board that are appointed by the International President for the purpose of building relationships with federal representatives and agencies and working with the ILWU Legislative Department to advocate on ILWU issues. The Coast Longshore Division has a separate Legislative Committee consisting of Coast Longshore Division members appointed by the International President to advocate on longshore, clerk, and foremen issues. Similar to the International Legislative Committee, the Coast Longshore Division Legislative Committee works with the Coast Longshore Division officers and ILWU Legislative Department to develop policies and positions. These committees work with congressional leaders and represent the ILWU or Coast Longshore Division at events hosted by members of congress and agencies.

In presidential election years, the presidential endorsement is made by the International Executive Board.

The ILWU has a Political Action Fund (PAF) that is solely funded through voluntary member contributions to support candidates and issues that advance ILWU concerns.

The members of ILWU Canada have their own political structure, consistent with the laws of their country and wishes of their organizational membership.

# The Ten Guiding Principles of the ILWU

*The ILWU began with a set of cardinal principles upon which it continues to operate. These were memorialized by the union's Convention held in San Francisco in 1953. They were amended by the 2012 International Convention in San Diego.*

**I.** A Union is built on its members. The strength, understanding and unity of the membership can determine the union's course and its advancements. The members who work, who make up the union and pay its dues can best determine their own destiny. If the facts are honestly presented to the members in the ranks, they will best judge what should be done and how it should be done. In brief, it is the membership of the union which is the best judge of its own welfare; not the officers, not the employers, not the politicians and the fair weather friends of labor. Above all, this approach is based on the conviction that given the truth and an opportunity to determine their own course of action, the rank and file in 99 cases out of 100 will take the right path in their own interests and in the interests of all the people.

**II.** Labor unity is at all times the key for a successful economic advancement. Anything that detracts from labor unity hurts all labor. Any group of workers which decides to put itself above other workers through craft unionism or through cozy deals at the expense of others will in the long run gain but little and inevitably will lose both its substance and its friends. No matter how difficult the going, a union must fight in every possible way to advance the principle of labor unity.

**III.** Workers are indivisible. There can be no discrimination because of race, color, creed, national origin, religious or political belief, sex, gender preference, or sexual orientation. Any division among the workers can help no one but the employers. Discrimination of worker against worker is suicide.

Discrimination is a weapon of the boss. Its entire history is proof that it has served no other purpose than to pit worker against worker to their own destruction.

**IV.** "To help any worker in distress" must be a daily guide in the life of every trade union and its individual members. Labor solidarity means just that. Unions have to accept the fact that the solidarity of labor stands above all else, including even the so-called sanctity of the contract. We cannot adopt for ourselves the policies of union leaders who insist that because they have a contract, their members are compelled to perform work even behind a picket line. Every picket line must be respected as though it were our own.

**V.** Any union, if it is to fulfill its appointed task, must put aside all internal differences and issues to combine for the common cause of advancing the welfare of the membership. No union can successfully fulfill its purpose in life if it allows itself to be distracted by any issue which causes division in its ranks and undermines the unity which all labor must have in the face of the employer.

**VI.** The days are long gone when a union can consider dealing with single employers. The powerful financial interests of the country are bound together in every conceivable type of united organization to promote their own welfare and to resist the demands of labor. Labor can no more win with the ancient weapons of taking on a single employer in industry any more than it can hope to win through the worn-out dream of withholding its skill until an employer sues for peace. The employers of this country are part of a well-organized, carefully coordinated, effective fighting machine. They can be met only on equal terms, which requires industry-wide bargaining and the most extensive economic strength of organized labor.

**VII.** Just as water flows to its lowest level, so do wages if the bulk of the workers are left unorganized. The day of craft unionism – the aristocracy of labor – was over when mass production methods were introduced. To organize the unorganized must be a cardinal principle of any union worth its salt; and to accomplish this is not merely in the interest of the unorganized, it is for the benefit of the organized as well.

**VIII.** 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 reserve economic power in times of strife.

**IX.** A new type of unionism is called for which does not confine its ambitions and demands only to wages. Conditions of work, security of employment and adequate provisions for the workers and their families in times of need are of equal, if not greater importance, than the hourly wage.

**X.** Jurisdictional warfare and jurisdictional raiding must be outlawed by labor itself. Nothing can do as much damage to the ranks of labor and to the principle of labor unity and solidarity as jurisdictional bickering and raiding among unions. Both public support and strike victories are jeopardized by jurisdictional warfare.

This code for rank and file unionism is implemented by the membership's participation in organization, negotiations, strike machinery, contract enforcement and every other aspect of union life. Thus, its discipline springs out of participation, conviction and the right of the membership to decide its own course of action. The above principles and steps to implement them, and an informed and alert membership make the union what it is.

# Constitution of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union

## PREAMBLE

*Since the beginning of history humankind has struggled individually and collectively for political, economic and cultural betterment, and has the greatest ability to make such advancement through democratic organization to achieve common aims.*

*Therefore, we who have the common objectives to advance the living standards of ourselves and our fellow workers everywhere in the world, to promote the general welfare of our nation and our communities, to banish racial and religious prejudice and discrimination, to strengthen democracy everywhere and achieve permanent peace in the world, do form ourselves into one, indivisible union and adopt the following Constitution to guide our conduct and protect our democracy within the union.*

## The ILWU Constitution: Article III, Objectives

The Objectives of the organization are:

- **First**, to unite in one organization, regardless of religion, race, creed, color, gender, sexual orientation, political affiliation or nationality, all workers within the jurisdiction of this International;
- **Second**, to maintain and improve the wages, hours and working conditions of all its members without discrimination;
- **Third**, to educate the membership of this organization in the history of the American labor movement and in present day labor problems and tactics;
- **Fourth**, to secure legislation in the interests of labor and to oppose anti-labor legislation.

## ILWU Principles

The three principles that emerge from the ILWU's concept of "The International" are:

- 1) There must be equal measures of leadership from the Officers and initiative by the locals.
- 2) The International is the thread that weaves together the many regions and constituencies of the ILWU into a unified and progressive force in the ranks of labor and the community.
- 3) There should be maximum local autonomy consistent with the need for coordinated negotiations and contract administration, democratic procedures, and overall solidarity.

# *An injury to one is an injury to all.*