Murder, death threats and violent thugs accompany ICTSI into Central America

International Container Terminal Services Incorporated (ICTSI) – the rogue employer responsible for flagrant contract violations at the Port of Portland – is now expanding operations in Central America where murder, military repression, death threats and anti-union attacks are accompanying the firm’s expansion.

Labor leader attacked

The family of Honduran dock-worker union leader, Victor Crespo, became the latest assassination target on January 27 when an armed assailant murdered Crespo’s father and injured his mother by running them over with a stolen truck in an attack outside the family home. Other Crespo family members narrowly escaped death and injury. Victor Crespo and his family have faced death threats because of his efforts to help workers at Puerto Cortés, a newly privatized operation container terminal that was recently taken-over by ICTSI.

Thugs & threats

An October 2013 article in The Dispatcher explained how members of the Honduran labor union (SGTM) encountered violent thugs, military forces and death threats after seeking union rights for workers. ICTSI secured a lucrative 30-year contract last February to operate the port through their OPC subsidiary. The company expects volumes could reach 600,000 containers, shipped to and from Honduras and neighboring countries.

Brush with death squads

By last September, SGTM General Secretary Victor Crespo had made no progress reaching a contract but he did begin receiving death threats. He narrowly escaped an assassination attempt by armed thugs who broke into his home during the early morning hours. The attack was foiled at the last minute by concerned neighbors who sounded the alarm, allowing Crespo to slip away with his life. After the failed attack, Crespo received critical help from the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF), who made arrangements to try and protect him from the death squads.

ICTSI’s privatization play

ICTSI is a player in the growing effort to privatize formerly-public ports.
LETTERS TO THE DISPATCHER

Dear Editor,

Your coverage of the recent ILWU Longshore Division conference on “History and Traditions” was outstanding! I was especially pleased that you referred to the solidarity shown by all Longshore members who boycotted a mandatory vote – required by the Taft-Hartley Act – on the employers’ last offer during the 1948 strike. That negotiation eventually led to the demise of the old Waterfront Employers Association, and for the moment at least, a less confrontational environment between the employers and the ILWU. But most importantly, it shows us the strength in working together.

The accompanying Dispatcher article on “meeting attendance” by former ILWU Vice President J.R. Robertson was also well timed. When I started on the waterfront in 1949, there was little problem, if any, with getting quorums at two meetings a month in the Wilmington/San Pedro area. Of course we didn’t have many benefits at that time, which later negotiations obtained. The main subject at the meetings back then related to “pork chop” issues. As I recall, we only had up to three weeks of vacation – and only if one made the hours and was eligible. But there was talk of future pensions and health and dental care.

Has our union now advanced to the point of having unparalleled benefits and wages, so that members are no longer as hungry as we were in those days? I hope members realize that these benefits are not written in stone and are subject to negotiations. It behooves everyone to attend the meetings and help our union move forward. Complacency and failure to attend union meetings will undermine our rank and file control. Let’s hang in there together so our rank and file will be well-informed, and we can win a good contract!

In Solidarity,

Tony “chuchu” Salcido, Local 13 Pensioner
San Pedro, CA

Dear Editor,

I highly recommend that all ILWU members read the recent article “Death of Nelson Mandela recalls decades of ILWU support for anti-apartheid struggle,” which appeared in the December 2013 issue of The Dispatcher. The article is in depth, very informative, and really underscores the ILWU’s role in the anti-apartheid struggle, which appeared in the December 2013 issue of The Dispatcher. The article is divided into three sections: Nelson Mandela, the ILWU, and the struggle. It demonstrates how working class solidarity can make real change.

The Nelson Mandela Freedom Award was presented to Mrs. Robinson. South African Consul-General, the Honorable C. S. N.S. Noladza, also presented a Nelson Mandela Freedom Award for the ILWU to the San Pedro, CA

Harry Bridges on meeting attendance

[The following excerpt from Harry Bridges’ column “On the Beam” originally appeared in November 13, 1964 issue of The Dispatcher: It is reprinted here at the request of the Executive Board of the Pacific Coast Pensions Association.]

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The ILWU has always led in having large rank and file turnouts at union meetings. For one thing we developed a policy of having regular stop work meetings—so there was no excuse for local members not to turn up. Many of our locals—usually longshore—still follow the stop-work practice. But even stop-work meetings often don’t pull a quorum. And even if there is a quorum, a majority of members are often not present. It is fair to say that non-attendance at union meetings contributes as much to anti-labor principles as so-called “right-to-work” laws. Such laws legalize the idea that the worker on the job does not need to be a member of a union. Those who do not participate in union business also help these phony laws by weakening the unions’ ability to protect the job, the wages, welfare benefits, safety and security that goes with a strong, militant union.

Responsibility and duty to attend meetings goes hand in hand with the right to belong to a union. It goes with jobs. It is the most important privilege in a democracy—especially if you expect to have a voice in running your affairs.

No one can deny that there haven’t been changes in ways that unions operate as compared to 20-30 years ago. Part of the change is the result of the new methods—“automation”—the addition of so many of the fringe benefits, health insurance, pensions and etc.. Once the primary function of union leadership was negotiating wages and conditions and settling collective bargaining disputes. Now union leadership must administer a variety of funds and very complicated contracts. This is all the more reason the rank and file should attend meetings, participate and keep tight control over their union.

The rank and file should understand the best way to help union officers gain dictatorial powers, to indulge in political shenanigans and racketeering, and even get rich from union leadership is to stay away from union meetings.

An officer should have to attend union meetings. Nothing has been invented yet to substitute for working rank and file meetings, with officers present, and when asked, be forced to stand up, answer questions, and, if need be, called to account for what they’ve done or are doing or haven’t done! – Harry Bridges

Harry Bridges on meeting attendance

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in the developing world. Privatization efforts across the globe are being aided by the World Bank, wealthy investors, and “free trade” agreements that undermine public ownership and ease private takeover of services. Such deals are designed to and improve their public ports quickly discover that access to investment capital is difficult to secure – but easy to get if government officials agree to privatize. When public assets are sold to private owners, workers and their unions are usually left behind. The new private employers promote “yellow” or “company” unions that don’t challenge the new owners and prevent workers from creating democratic trade unions.

Super profits for privatizers
Outside investors and terminal operators stand to make fortunes when ports and other public assets are privatized. Investors who make these deals spend timecounting officials in countries they target – often with support and assistance from the U.S. State and Commerce Departments – and they are usually willing and expected to share some of their windfall profits with local politicians, business leaders, police and military officials who facilitate the privatization process.

Who wants to be a billionaire?
The privatization frenzy that took place in Mexico during the 1990’s serves as an example – and powerful motivator – for those wishing to make similar fortunes today in countries like Honduras. When Mexico’s public-owned telephone system and other public assets were sold to private investors as part of the “reforms” surrounding the NAFTA free trade agreement, it created new millionaires and billionaires, including one of the world’s richest men – Carlos Slim – who now commands a fortune worth $72 billion dollars, putting him on par with Microsoft tycoon Bill Gates.

Layoffs & lower pay for workers
When ICTSI was celebrating their new deal giving them 30-year control over Puerto Cortés, the Honduran state-owned port operator (Empresa Nacional Portuaria or “ENP”) began dismissing hundreds of public port workers without advance notice. Reaction to the terminations angered other port workers and union members across the country who responded with solidarity actions, marches and strikes. In December 2013, the government sent armed troops to threaten port workers who declared they would resist the intimidation until the nation’s president or officials agreed to help their union secure jobs at ICTSI.

Military confronts workers
As The Dispatcher was going to press in January, armed forces continued to occupy Puerto Cortés. IITF’s Honduran affiliate that represents public port workers, Sindicatos de Trabajadores de la Empresa Nacional Portuaria (SITRAENP) has been promised by the government to expect more productive negotiations with ENP, the nation’s public port agency. Victor Crespo and SITRAENP union members have also heard from Honduran government officials that ICTSI made a similar commitment to move U.S. installed several right-wing, anti-union governments and engaged in a massive military buildup during Ronald Reagan’s secret and illegal war during the 1980’s that was waged against pro-union rebels in neighboring Nicaragua and El Salvador.

Massacre feared possible
The IITF is concerned that the Honduran government’s latest military intervention at Puerto Cortés and their refusal to address worker concerns could culminate in a massacre, and has called for solidarity actions worldwide to protect workers in case negotiations fail. On December 4, 2013, the IITF sent a letter to Honduras President Porfirio Lobo, protesting the violation of port workers’ rights and urging him to help facilitate a prompt and fair settlement. Following the assassination of Crespo’s father, the IITF took other diplomatic and solidarity initiatives to help.

Similar conflicts in Costa Rica
Dispatcher readers may recall a similar struggle by dockworkers in Costa Rica that also involved privatization (see articles in March, June and August of 2010). Costa Rica’s public ports of Limón and Puntarenas were privatization targets, following a $52 million loan from the World Bank to “modernize” both sites. When the SITRANACP dockworkers refused to go along, the government ordered police to break into the union headquarters at 4:30 am on May 28, 2010, and take over the building. When the union continued to resist, the government orchestrated a sham election in January 2011 to replace the democratically-elected union leadership with a new team of government puppets. Costa Rica’s Constitutional Court later reversed the government’s illegal ouster of SITRANACP union officials in August of 2011.

The ILUW supported SITRANACP with letters from International President McElrath to President Obama and encouraged 25 members of Congress to express concerns to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. The ILUW hosted a SITRANACP delegation at the April, 2010 Longshore Caucus in Long Beach, and placed several full-page advertisements in major Costa Rican newspapers to educate citizens about the undemocratic actions taken by their government leaders.

Resistance by SITRANACP
Workers and international solidarity put government officials on the defensive; by mid-2011 press reports noted the government had “back-tracked” on the privatization scheme which had been put “on hold indefinitely.”

However, as of 2014, the project appears to be moving forward after the government quickly granted a monopoly container concession to APM, which is slated to begin operations in three years, which will doom the public port.

Killed for belonging to a union family: Victor Manuel Crespo, a former union leader was murdered after he was opposed to a private port.

Activist murdered
Port workers and their union leaders continue to receive threats – and worse – from those advocating Costa Rica’s privatization scheme. Last year, a former union leader was murdered after he actively opposed the new private terminal location because it would destroy a turtle sanctuary. Police have not arrested or charged anyone for the crime.

ICTSI moves into El Salvador
In December of 2013, El Salvador’s port authority (CEPA) announced they had pre-selected ICTSI and three other companies to submit bids in April, 2014 for a 30-year private concession agreement to manage the country’s newest port of La Unión on the Pacific coast. The modern, multi-use container terminal was just completed in 2009. The public agency initially operated the port with four, second-hand rubber-tire gantry cranes that cost $4.4 million, and planned to purchase more equipment to boost capacity to 300,000 containers a year. The privatization plan asks ICTSI and other bidders to invest $30 million in the first ten years of operations, enabling the terminal to handle 1 million containers a year.

Bloody history
El Salvador is the smallest, most densely populated and a highly industrialized country in Central America. During the 1980’s, the nation was torn apart by a bitter civil war that killed 75,000 residents, sparked by inequality between a handful of wealthy elites (backed by the U.S. military) who controlled the government and business, while the vast majority of Salvadorans lived then and now, in poverty. El Salvador has one of the world’s highest murder rates, a distinction they share with Honduras.

“Corporations that privatize often act like modern-day pirates who attack workers and communities for profit,” said ILUW International Vice President Ray Familathe. “Companies like ICTSI have an agenda of plunder and profit that seems to spawn violence and repression. That has to be challenged in Central America. Portland or wherever they try to take advantage.”

Honduran military backed by US: Honduras’ military has been heavily influenced and financed by the United States in order to protect foreign corporations and a domestic political establishment. Millions of dollars were secretly spent in Honduras during the 1980’s to fund Ronald Reagan’s illegal war against pro-labor rebels in El Salvador and Nicaragua.
Year after year, up and down the coast, ILWU members, pensioners and auxiliary clubs organize toy drives and donate their time and money to local charity groups who are helping to brighten the holiday for those who have fallen on tough times. Thousands of families along the coast had a happier Christmas because of the generosity of ILWU members and their spirit of solidarity.

Southern California Feed the Community Day and Children’s Christmas Party

On November 25 and 26 Southern California ILWU members and their families distributed 1,500 Thanksgiving baskets to families in need. “We had volunteers from every ILWU local in Southern California, as well as pensioners and Auxiliary 8 members. Local 26 members provided the security and Local 65 Port Police provided traffic control,” said Lisa Tonson, Chairman for the Holiday Events Committee.

Then in December, the 2013 Southern California ILWU Children’s Christmas Party helped approximately 3,000 kids have a happy holiday season. Over 100 volunteers helped to make this year’s event possible. The committee reached out to local non-profits to identify families in the area who may be in need of some assistance.

Volunteers began preparations in the early morning of December 16. ILWU volunteers set out rows of toys and sports equipment. By 9am the hall was filled with Christmas music and children and their families began filing into the ILWU Memorial Hall. Children were allowed to pick a toy of their choice and were treated to cookies, punch, face painting and a visit from Santa.

Local 13, 26, 63, 94, the Federated Auxiliary 8, Southern California Pensioners, Longshoremen Memorial Association and the Local 63 Memorial Association all made this year’s holiday party possible. The Holiday Events Committee works year round to plan and organize the annual charity events.

Bay Area toy drive

Local 10 hosted a Christmas Party that helped a multitude of families and hundreds of children celebrate the holidays. There were generous servings of food, sweet treats, face-painters, caricature portraits, and balloon artists. Santa Claus was the most popular attraction, with children lining up to tell him their Christmas wishes. A large team of volunteers made the event possible, coordinated by Frank Cresci, and Chris Christiansen of the Bay Area Longshoremen’s Memorial Association (BALMA).

Toys for Tots donations were gathered at Local 10’s hall during the month of December. The success of the event was made possible by the many contributions from the members of Local 10, 34, 75, 91 and Bay Area Pensioners. Beth Susim coordinated the Toy Drive again this year which raised several thousand dollars to purchase toys that were used to brighten the holidays for Bay Area families.

“This was a fantastic job by ILWU members. Every year we ask members to step up and they did once again. Thanks to the generosity of Local 10, 34 and 91,” Crenshaw said.

Local 10 and BALMA also donated money and toiletries to Toolworks Working Essentials, a non-profit that helps people with disabilities and those who have fallen on hard times achieve independence. Local 10 members donated several boxes of toothpaste, toothbrushes, shampoo, deodorant which will be distributed to women’s shelters and homeless shelters serving veterans and others in the Bay Area in need.

Local 34 Marine Clerks 2014 Toy and Bike Drive was a great success. Toys and bikes were donated to the San Francisco and Oakland Salvation Army Children’s Toy Drive. Many thanks go out to Lea Brocchi, Lance Brocchi, Julie Fisher, John Fisher, Allen Fung, Dave Hill, Ed Kachmar, Craig Lauderdaile, Julie Mavromatos, Jacqueline Peralta, Deborah Sedasey, and Jacqueline Singleton for their donations and support.

Local 19’s Christmas for Kids

Thanks to the generous contributions from Local 19 members, the 2013 Christmas for Kids committee raised nearly $10,000 to benefit several area charities and families. This year, $5,342 was donated to Tree House, a program that helps foster kids. Steve Wintemute and Carol Bragdon went to the KIRO radio telephone for Tree House and challenged others to donate and match Local 19’s donation. By the end of the hour a total of $22,000 was raised for Treehouse.

In addition to the charity organizations, the Christmas for Kids committee donated $1,500 in food and toys to three families from the community. The Local 19 Christmas for Kids committee members and volunteers included: Carol Bragdon, Jeannine Lollon, Robert MacDonald, and Steve Wintemute.

Taco Mama Toy Drive

During the 2013 Local 23 Toy Drive in Tacoma, members donated $28,089 which helped over 650 local children in need who were able to choose two presents each. Charities Director, Dragan Butorac, and the toy drive committee of Mandy Peterson, Amy James, Kim Boespflug, Dana Beach and Holly Hulecher, did most of the shopping at a local union store for the gifts. Local 98 also donated $1,000 toward the drive.

Local 23 also donated $200 gift cards to grade school students in need who try hard in school. Local 23 members Dragan Butorac and Dana Beach delivered gift cards to all 161 grade schools Pierce County which totaled $32,200.

Together with the toy drive donations ($28,089) and gift card donations to local schools ($32,200) the generous contributions of Local 23 members totaled $62,689.
Local 23 members also donated $12,000 dollars to the Food Connection food bank during the holiday season. Volunteers from Local 23 helped with both Christmas and Thanksgiving dinners that fed over 400 at each setting. Local 23 members volunteer there throughout the year. Once every month they prepare lunches that feed around 300 people a day. They also bring in monthly donations of toiletries and clothing for the homeless of Tacoma. “Our volunteers are grateful for the opportunity to help serve our community,” said Local 23 member Byron Baydo.

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Local 23 members and pensioners in Tacoma volunteer at the St Leo’s Food Connection year round. They also help prepare and serve special holiday meals during Christmas and Thanksgiving.

Local 23 members raised $62,689 in for the 2013 Toy Drive and gift card donations.

Portland

Locals 8, 40 and 92 joined forces with the Local 8 Federal Credit Union to collect bikes and toys for two local charities. One set of donated gifts went to the ‘Toy N Joy Makers,’ an organization with a 95-year history that works with Portland Firefighters to help children in the community. The other group of toys were contributed to the Northwest Oregon Labor Council, who sponsored a luncheon for families in need and allowed them to choose gifts contributed by ILWU and other union members. The drive could not have happened without the work of Don Mehner, Chris Scheffel, Bill Underwood Sr, Matthew Forman, and the credit union staff.

San Francisco firefighters with the help of ILWU volunteers picked up the toys at the Local 10 hall and delivered them to struggling families.

Local 23 members in Longview filled a car trailer with toys during the 2013 toy drive.

In addition to a successful toy drive, Local 29 members also collected over 500 pounds of food for a food bank that helps families throughout San Diego County.

San Diego food drive

Local 29 members in San Diego participated in a successful toy and food drive. They collected over 500 pounds of food for the Jacobs and Cushman San Diego Food Bank that helps 320,000 people every month. The toy and food drives were organized by Henry Dominguez, Cameron Pate and Priscilla Perry.

ILWU Local 502 showed their Christmas spirit with their annual drive for the Surrey Food Bank. The Union donated over 1000 pounds of food and $4,000 in cash. The generosity of everyone in the local continues to serve the community on many fronts. The food and cash was the result of individual donations. (Photo: Dave Hopkinson, Rocky Thompson (Day BA), Carly Tabin and Grant Tabin).
Con la muerte de Nelson Mandela recordamos el apoyo de ILWU a la lucha contra el apartheid

Nelson Mandela, el primer presidente negro de Sudáfrica, ganador del Premio Nobel de la Paz, antiguo prisionero político y líder del Congreso Nacional Africano que se convirtió en símbolo mundial de la lucha contra el apartheid murió el 5 de diciembre a los 95 años de edad. El presidente electo del Local 10 y miembro de la Mesa Ejecutiva Internacional, Melvin MacKay, asistió al funeral en Sudáfrica a nombre de ILWU.

"Un personaje como Nelson Man- dela se da sólo una vez en la vida. El simbolizó para todo el mundo los derechos humanos y la lucha por la justicia social. Guía a Sudáfrica por la convención general de ILWU varias resoluciones criticaron la actitud de los sindicatos en todo el mundo que se negaron a participar en la lucha contra el apartheid sudafricano. "Que yo sepa, ningún otro sindicato estadounidense hizo paros laborales en apoyo de la lucha contra el apartheid, ILWU fue de los pocos sindicatos en el mundo que Piet heid. Así, el activismo de los afiliados de ILWU durante décadas es un testimonio claro de que el apoyo laboral por el apartheid es una tradición de ILWU, ya que los trabajadores de ILWU usaron su poder en los puertos para luchar por la justicia social tanto en el país como en otros países. En 1935, los trabajadores portuarios del Local 10 se negaron a cargar mercancías sudafricanas en el puerto de Yerba buena para alimentar a la maquinaria del fascismo en Italia y en Japón. En los años 70, los afiliados del Local 10 se negaron a cargar mercancías sudafricanas en el puerto de Yerba buena para alimentar a la maquinaria del fascismo en Italia y en Japón."

Huelga contra Nedloyd Kimberly

Los afiliados del Local 10 de ILWU enfocaron la atención nacional en la lucha contra el apartheid en 1984 cuando se rehusaron a descargar el cargamento sudafricano del barco holandés, Nedloyd Kimberly, en el muelle 80 de San Francisco. Aunque descargaron el barco, el cargamento "sangraba" de acero, relaciones automotrices y vinos sudafricanos permanecieron en la bodega por 10 días mientras los simpatizantes de la comunidad realizaron maniobras de apoyo en la fogata de la sede de la Mesa Ejecutiva de ILWU, "El activismo de los afiliados de ILWU durante décadas es un testimonio claro de que el apoyo laboral por el apartheid es una tradición de ILWU, ya que los trabajadores de ILWU usaron su poder en los puertos para luchar por la justicia social tanto en el país como en otros países. En 1935, los trabajadores portuarios del Local 10 se negaron a cargar mercancías sudafricanas en el puerto de Yerba buena para alimentar a la maquinaria del fascismo en Italia y en Japón. En los años 70, los afiliados del Local 10 se negaron a cargar mercancías sudafricanas en el puerto de Yerba buena para alimentar a la maquinaria del fascismo en Italia y en Japón.

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Corporate America is clear about what they want from Congress: lower taxes, less regulation and weaker unions. Now all three goals have been combined into one piece of legislation — a “free trade” agreement, known as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) — involving the U.S., Malaysia, Vietnam and 10 other Pacific Rim nations.

**Corporation vs. democracy**

Former Congressional staffer Gordon Lafer recalls a sobering experience he had in 2010 with Assistant U.S. Trade Representative Barbara Weisel, who was responsible for negotiating the TPP. Lafer was the Senior Policy Adviser for the U.S. House of Representatives’ Committee on Education and Labor — the top congressional staffer responsible for upholding labor standards in international trade treaties. But he was shocked when Weisel told him that the administration “had no position” on excluding non-democratic countries from trade deals when Lafer asked how the White House planned to deal with undemocratic countries like Vietnam where children as young as 14 are forced to work 12-hour days, where there is no right to free speech, no right to protest, no right to strike, and no freedom to form unions. “Oh, you can have labor rights without democracy,” Weisel insisted. But when asked to name a single country where that happens, she was unable to provide any example.

**Worker rights matter**

Lafer later made the one thing that non-democratic regimes can never tolerate: independent workers’ organizations. “That’s why trade unionists were the first ones marched through the gates of Dachau,” he says. “One reason why business invests in Vietnam and China is not simply that wages are low, but that the absence of democratic rights promises to lock in cheap labor for years to come.”

Weisel noted that when worker pressure — including thousands of illegal strikes — increased pressure on Chinese officials to revise the nation’s labor law in 2008, Apple, Hewlett-Packard, and other members of the U.S.-China Business Council lobbied successfully to limit the expansion of Chinese workers’ rights.

**Expanding corporate rights**

The agreements protect and extend corporate rights. For example, under the TPP, corporations are allowed to sue governments if they don’t like labor, environment or social regulations — bypassing state and federal courts in favor of secret arbitration tribunals. Another example concerns patents for expensive drug. The time between the U.S. approval and the time that the drug was approved in the EU lengthened to 20 years because of a free trade agreement signed by the Clinton administration in 1994. The additional years of patent protection were eagerly sought by pharmaceutical industry lobbyists in order to secure billions in additional profits — at the expense of consumers who were denied access to low-cost generics. Even the tobacco industry is using free trade deals that lower barriers to cigarette imports into developing nations, causing smoking rates and disease to increase.

**Business vs. democracy**

When Obama ran for office in 2008, he campaigned against NAFTA, saying it was “devastating” and calling it a “big mistake.” But after winning office, he became a cheerleader for corporate free trade deals, including the TPP.

“We shouldn’t worry about the morality of politicians — because we’ll always be disappointed — but we should be worried about the growth of corporate power in our society,” says Rich Austin, who’s been educating members and the community about the TPP and corporate free trade on his weekly radio program that airs every Tuesday at 4:30 PM on KSVR 91.7 FM, from Skagit Valley Community College in Washington State. Archived programs can be accessed at www.skagitdemocrats.org/page_dp4246

**Popular opposition**

Polls consistently show that Americans oppose “free trade” agreements, beginning with NAFTA, which resulted in hundreds of thousands of jobs being lost to low-wage maquiladora factories. NAFTA also sparked millions of Mexicans to migrate north in search of work after their rural economies were destroyed by cheap corn imports that put millions of farmers out of work.

Politicians are wobbling: There’s a real problem with politicians wobbling on free trade, such as Representative Rick Larson in Washington State’s 2nd District, who criticized NAFTA when he ran for office in 2000. Now, Larson and several other New Democrat Coalition members from Washington State are refusing to sign a letter endorsed by 151 Democratic colleagues who oppose efforts to “fast track” the TPP free trade deal, according to Rick Austin, President of the Pacific Coast Pensioners Association.

Fast Track = Congressional cop-out

“Fast-track authority” is a legislative loophole, pushed by corporations and their friends in Congress who want to avoid the political heat that comes with a vigorous public debate of “free trade” agreements in Congress. If the “fast track” rule is adopted, it would ban Congress from debating or amending the TPP. The same tactic was used 20 years ago by corporations to avoid debating NAFTA in Congress. If “fast track” is approved, it will limit Congress to a simple “yes” or “no” vote on a “take-it-or-leave-it” basis, with no changes allowed.
San Francisco's Port Commission has a new Vice President

ILWU International Secretary-Treasurer Willie Adams will serve a two-year term as Vice President with Port Commission President and former San Francisco Supervisor, Leslie Katz. Issues facing the Commission include controversial plans to build a new waterfront stadium for the Warriors basketball team and a high-rise luxury condo and commercial development near San Francisco’s historic Ferry Building. “I’m looking forward to tackling these challenges and doing what’s best for San Francisco citizens and their historic waterfront,” said Adams.

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