



THE DISPATCHER

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Page 6: Bay Area locals will commemorate Bloody Thursday with a full roster of events.



In Harry's Shadow: The Southern California Pensioners Group worked with Locals 13, 63, and 94 to build a new memorial in San Pedro honoring the first two longshore workers killed in the 1934 strike that gave birth to the ILWU. (L-R) Coast Committeeman Ray Ortiz Jr.; Harry Bridges' son, Robbie; International Vice President Joseph Radisich; International Secretary-Treasurer Willie Adams; and Pensioners President Al Perisho attended the inaugural ceremony.

Walking In the Footsteps of Fallen Martyrs

Only a handful of union veterans are still alive today who remember the 1934 waterfront strike that led to the founding of the ILWU. The specter of losing those remaining men who witnessed an epic struggle on the docks 75 years ago moved hundreds to celebrate in Southern California by marching and witnessing the unveiling of a new memorial in San Pedro on a sunny May day.

On the morning of Friday, May 15, hundreds of longshore workers and family members gathered together with port truckers, firefighters, and community supporters at a deserted intersection on the edge of the scrappy port town of Wilmington, Calif. The group assembled there to be as close as they could to the site where two longshore strikers were shot exactly 75 years ago. Twenty-year-old striker

Richard "Dickie" Parker was shot in the chest and died on his way to the hospital in the early morning hours of May 15, 1934. Striker John Knudsen, 51, was also shot there and died a few weeks later. Other strikers were shot and beaten—some of them seriously—after leading a brave charge against armed guards who were protecting a camp of strikebreakers employed by stevedore and shipping companies.

The 1934 strike that shut down the West Coast ports would eventually cost five other strikers their lives before a victory was secured that included a coastwide contract, hiring halls, and the beginnings of a union that would become the ILWU.

The crowd that assembled to mark the occasion 75 years later listened attentively to a brief but inspiring round of speeches from Local 13 President George Lujan, Local 63 member Peter Peyton, and Local 94 President Danny Miranda. Each speaker noted that the first blood to flow in the 1934

strike was shed on the docks of Wilmington, within sight of where everyone was now standing.

Walking the martyrs' walk

When the speeches were finished, the group of 200 began their three-mile march down Harry Bridges Boulevard. Their destination was Gibson Park in San Pedro, where pensioners and politicians were waiting to inaugurate a new memorial to the martyrs who gave their lives in the '34 strike — along with a memorial tribute to all the other longshore workers who have died on the docks since the union was founded.

The march was a family affair, with plenty of children in tow and babies in strollers. "I wanted my kids to be here today so they could be a part of history and remember this when they grow up," said Nick Olson who marched with his wife Jennifer, towing daughter Hailey and Isabel in a wagon and carrying Nick Jr. in a backpack.

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LETTERS TO THE DISPATCHER

Dear Editor,

I sure appreciate the color of the *Dispatcher*. Everyone does a superb job with this paper. Thank you.

**C.J. Casebeer, Local 34, retired 23 years
Nampa, ID**

Dear Editor,

I greatly enjoy reading the *Dispatcher*, each issue as it comes out. It is a great publication and so full of interesting information.

I was an active member for 45 years and have been retired now for 18 years. In my opinion, the ILWU is the best union in the nation. The pension is great and the medical coverage is outstanding. I've had many medical procedures at no cost to me. I've had hearing aids and eye care at little cost.

Brothers and sisters, support your union 100 percent. I'm proud to be a member of the ILWU.

**Ralph Tennant, Local 63, ret.
Garden Grove, CA**

Dear Editor,

The memorial established in San Pedro to honor dockworkers killed on the job at the LA and Long Beach Harbors is an important way to remind all of us about the history of our union and those who have lost their lives on the docks. I'd like to note that two additional ILWU workers have lost their lives while working on the docks. Rudy Acosta was a guard who died the day after Labor Day in 2002 when he was struck by a top-handler at a dangerous intersection that had been ignored by officials at Pacific Container Terminal operated by SSA. Several years earlier, guard John Hansis was struck and killed on the docks by a utility truck. Both these guards deserve our recognition and respect, along with all workers who have perished while working on the docks.

**Luisa Gratz, Local 26 President & International Executive Board member
Los Angeles, CA**

Dear Editor,

Coast Committeeman Leal Sundet hit the nail on the head when he said, "It's time for Congress to face the fact that the TWIC program has nothing to do with improving security at the ports....TWIC was a political response to the 9/11 attacks." ["Port security: TWIC cards aren't the answer," *Dispatcher*, May 2009].

Congress has a lot of facts to face and a lot of questions to answer. As an example, an overwhelming majority of people support a national, single-payer health care program. Fifty-nine percent of the doctors here in the U.S. do, too. So who is Congress representing?

In early May, Senator Max Baucus (D- MT) had single-payer advocates—including some doctors from Physicians for a National Health Program—arrested at a meeting of the Senate Finance Committee. Their crime? They wanted to be included in what have now become sham "health care reform" hearings. The only people who were allowed to speak were apologists for the medical-industry complex. The game was and is rigged.

Little wonder. The medical-industry complex has been quite generous to old Max. Medical insurers, for-profit hospitals, and the pharmaceutical industry have tossed millions his way. Alas, he is not alone. Politicians from both sides of the aisle have their hands buried deep in the pockets of the medical-industry complex. They have sold their souls to their corporate benefactors. And working-class America gets sold out!

What has this got to do with TWIC? Money...as in "follow the money." Every aspect of TWIC has been sold to corporations that know how to treat lawmakers right. Campaign contributions purchase results! I may not know all there is to know about TWIC, but

I sure as hell know a three-card Monte scam when I see one. I see it in the taxpayer funded bailouts of financial institutions. I see it in the tax forgiveness schemes handed out to Daddy Warbucks and oil companies. The evidence is all around us. And make no mistake, after this current economic crisis has subsided one fact will remain: The wealthy will have entered the crisis wealthy and will emerge wealthy. Only working class families will have suffered.

Over the years the members and leaders of the ILWU have been out in front in the struggle for social and economic justice. But we cannot do it alone. Unfortunately, too many "labor statesmen" in other organizations have grown too predictable, too timid, and too comfortable. Labor needs resurgence. We need to return to our roots. Our heritage didn't have us going to lawmakers with our hats in our hands. We didn't settle for what we were told was "politically feasible." Our forbearers demanded what the ranks needed!

We won't get true health care reform or social and economic justice without a fight! It will take millions of us marching and picketing and protesting and laying down our tools until justice is won. That's how the pioneers of labor did it. Now it is our turn.

It's time once again to honor the holy scripture of labor: "An injury to one is an injury to all." And when certain suits and ties tell us to slow down we need to shout out the words of Thomas Paine, "Lead, follow, or get out of the way."

**Rich Austin, President
Pacific Coast Pensioners Association**

In the May issue of *The Dispatcher*, we neglected to identify George Cobb, Local 10 retired and president of the Bay Area Pensioners, in the photo of Northern California District Council members appearing on page 2. We regret the omission.

Send your letters to the editor to: *The Dispatcher*, 1188 Franklin St., San Francisco, CA 94109-6800 or email to editor@ilwu.org



This Land Is Our Land: Commercial and residential developers looking to snap up prime waterfront land near ports have frequently clashed with ILWU members trying to protect jobs and industry in key port towns. Washington State recently passed legislation that provides better protection for maritime ports and should make it harder for developers to take port land for inappropriate residential use. The ILWU lobbied hard to include Everett, Vancouver and Longview ports in the Container Ports Land Use Bill, which originally targeted only Seattle and Tacoma. "This was a landmark bill," said Jeff Davis, president of the Puget Sound District Council. "One of my personal goals since joining the council was to do what we could to protect public ports and this bill is a monumental step in that direction." Meanwhile, there are ongoing battles to safeguard land that supports port activities in Oakland, Los Angeles, and San Diego. From left: Jeff Davis; Washington Gov. Chris Gregoire; Puget Sound District Council legislative advocate Gordon Baxter.

DISPATCHER

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Southland ILWU members march to honor new memorial

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The three-mile march seemed to lengthen a bit as the heat of the day increased, but cold bottles of water arrived just in time to refresh the contingent as they neared Gibson Park.

Al Perisho of the Southern California Pensioners Group emceed the event with help from Lou Loveridge and Ray Patricio. Current and former local officers were recognized from the podium, along with former International Presidents James Spinosa and David Arian who were both on hand. Local 8 Auxiliary President Carol Chapman and her team of volunteers were thanked for their service along with the many pensioners who pitched in to make the day a success.

Bagpiper Elizabeth Ford began the formal ceremony by playing "Amazing Grace" prior to the presentation of colors from the local VFW chapter. An invocation by Port Chaplain Rev. Arthur Bartlett preceded a reading by pensioner John Vlaic, who read the names of 61 men who lost their lives while working on the docks in LA/Long Beach. After each name was read, pensioner Rino Marconi struck a brass bell in honor of the fallen brothers.

Pensioner Jerry Brady shared his poem, "First Bloodshed," reading words that are now permanently inscribed in

the granite slab that carries the names of the martyrs Dickie Parker and John Knudsen, along with the names of the 61 other fallen brothers.

International officers were on hand, including Vice President Joe Radisich, Secretary-Treasurer Willie Adams, and Coast Committeeman Ray Ortiz Jr. All three urged past and present members to remember the ILWU's legacy of sacrifice and honor that memory by continuing the struggle for justice.

Touching a piece of the past

Weighing in at 8,500 pounds, the new granite memorial with gold-leaf inscriptions took almost five years and \$130,000 to become realized—but it wasn't complete without the new bronze bust of Harry Bridges that is part of the monument. Southern California Pensioners commissioned the bust from renowned local sculptor Eugene Daub and designer Rob Firmin.

Harry Bridges' son, Robbie, was on hand to mark the special occasion by graciously thanking everyone for honoring the 1934 martyrs and memori-



A March to Remember: Hundreds of ILWU Local 13 members marched on May 15, proudly displaying the motto of the ILWU.

alizing his father, who helped lead the strike that established the union that became the ILWU.

After the speakers finished, hundreds gathered around the memorial to pose for photos with their families. Many people couldn't resist stepping forward to touch the granite and bronze sculpture, including David Schleibs, Deputy Secretary of the Victoria Branch of the Maritime Union of Australia, and his wife Julie, who both made a special effort to attend the march and participate in the memorial ceremonies. Afterward, Local 13 invited the Schleibs and other special guests to a BBQ at Longshoremen's Memorial Hall where chef

and longshoreman Mike Miller prepared a tasty lunch.

Al Perisho expressed gratitude to all of the pensioners, along with dozens of volunteers who came forward from Locals 13, 63, and 94, including Mike Piazza, Sal DiCostanzo, Victor Hudek, Patricia Aguirre, Mark Jurisic, Jimmy Monti, and many others.

"It took us almost five years to finish this project, and sometimes we felt like it was a race against time because the '34 strike veterans were going so fast," said Perisho. "We recently lost Joe Stahl who lived to be 101, and now there's just one remaining survivor that we know of—Babe Johnson—who's living in Long Beach but wasn't well enough to attend our event. So this memorial is now here and will remain behind when all of us are gone so that the next generations will understand how we got here and what kinds of sacrifices are sometimes necessary to make progress."



Girl Power: Ethan and Brandi Hargett brought daughters Marijane and Lili.



Small Hands, Big Help: Nyla Yanez, 4½, helped her parents, Luis and Norma, pass out cold water to thirsty marchers in San Pedro.



IBU Solidarity: Carlo Orlando, IBU Sgt. at Arms for the So. Cal. Region (R) marched with IBU Executive Board member Zac Villanueva.



Call to Action: Local 13 President George Lujan reminded marchers that the sacrifices of those who died in 1934 signify an obligation to keep fighting for justice.



Party of Five: Nick and Jennifer Olson brought daughters Hailey and Isabel, and son Nick Jr. (snuggled in dad's backpack), to the historic march.

A Big Step Forward For Long Beach: In a contentious, nearly six-hour meeting on May 12, Long Beach City Council members voted unanimously to green-light the Port of Long Beach's Middle Harbor Redevelopment Project. The \$750-million, 10-year project will update two decades-old terminals on Piers D, E, and F and expand them into one modernized terminal (pictured), more than doubling the cargo capacity of the old terminals. Over 150 longshore workers and their families attended in support of the project, and Local 63 member and ILWU Port Liaison Dominick Miretti and Southern California District Council President Rich Dines presented testimony. "This is a victory for the community," said Dines. "It addresses the underlying issues we've been facing for years—the congestion and the pollution." Although environmental groups opposed the Middle Harbor Project, citing the inadequacy of the Environmental Impact Report, Dines is confident the development will be both successful and green. The project includes an extensive electrified on-dock railyard that will increase on-dock rail capacity at the new terminal, eventually replacing 1,000 truck trips per day from local highways. Environmental measures such as cold-ironing, low-sulfur fuels, electrified cargo-handling equipment and tougher air quality standards for switch locomotives will reduce air pollution by more than half from current levels. The Port estimates the project will create 14,000 permanent regional jobs as well as 1,000 much-needed construction jobs for the local community. "The Middle Harbor Project will create jobs so that our casuals can become registered and secure the future of the ILWU in Southern California," said Dines, who called the project "a model for green growth in ports around the world."



Free Choice Act fight co



In Washington: Rite Aid warehouse worker Angel Warner went to Capitol Hill on May 20 to speak at a press conference on the Employee Free Choice Act, a bill that would make it easier for workers to join unions. “We like our jobs,” she told Congress, “we just want dignity, respect and a voice in our workplace. A person can only take so much—we decided it was time to stand up for ourselves.” Angel received a standing ovation from the audience after her remarks describing conditions at Rite Aid’s Lancaster, Calif. warehouse, where workers who voted to join the ILWU have been the targets of harassment, threats and intimidation by Rite Aid management. Also at the briefing was Cornell University labor expert Kate Bronfenbrenner, author of a new report which finds that employer opposition to workers’ efforts to form unions has intensified. “Employers are using an arsenal of legal and illegal tactics to interfere with workers trying to organize, and they are doing it with impunity,” Bronfenbrenner told lawmakers, urging them to support EFCA. Download a copy of the report at www.americanrightsatwork.org.

In San Diego: Local 29 members joined other labor and community supporters in front of Wal-Mart on April 9 to support the Employee Free Choice Act. Wal-Mart is one of the corporations vigorously lobbying to kill the bill. Home Depot and FedEx have also thrown their weight behind defeating the Free Choice Act. From left: Jeremy Edwards, Ernesto Collosi, Greg Bird, Alfonso Torres, Christine Torres, and Sergio Blanco. Fat Cat Lee Scott, CEO of Wal-Mart, prowled the demonstration.



Justice at the Beach: The pickets at Waikiki’s Pacific Beach Hotel got plenty of support during their April 29 - May 6 “Golden Week” demonstration against the union-busting company. Hotel owners have been trying to get rid of the union, but Local 142 has helped workers sustain a long-term struggle for justice. Local residents from across Oahu and members from more than a dozen unions showed up to show solidarity with the workers, and State lawmakers Senator Gary Hooser and Representatives Della Au Bellati, Roy Takumi, and Karen Awana walked the picket line on May 6. Picketers distributed several thousand leaflets about the boycott to the Japanese tourists who flock to the Islands during Golden Week and make up the bulk of the hotel’s business. The Labor Board recently issued a ruling against the hotel, supporting workers and their union.



The Golden Week Gang: ILWU affiliate American Radio Assoc. joined the Masters, Mates & Pilots union and the Marine Engineers union at the Pacific Beach Hotel boycott in Honolulu on April 30. From left: Dave Mori, ILWU Local 142 Oahu Division Director; Kelly Anderson, ARA; Adam Vokac, MEBA Port Rep; Carl Young, ARA Secretary-Treasurer; and Shane Ambrose, Local 142 Oahu Business Agent.



Solidarity in Stockton traveled to Stockton on May 17 to show solidarity with other unions that are fighting the closure of the plant in Stockton. Local 54 leaders are low-wage positions that have little to revive Stockton’s sagging economy.



Breaking News!

an important victory for Rite Aid workers and their union, the company has just agreed to hire –with full back pay– 48 workers who were laid off last year. The company broke the law by not negotiating with the union about the layoffs.



Lancaster: Rite Aid workers started organizing in spring 2006. In March '08 they voted in favor of joining the ILWU. Eight months later, the company illegally fired 50 workers and cut the number of hundreds more. According to the Bronfenbrenner report, such attacks are standard practice among private sector employers seeking to thwart worker organizing efforts. Rite-Aid workers staged the illegal layoffs in front of the Lancaster distribution center in November '08.



Port: A group of Local 10 'B' men are on strike at the Port of Los Angeles to support ILWU Local 54 and fight for good union jobs at the Port. They say most of the jobs at the port are temporary and offer few benefits and are doing little to help the local economy.

We Will Not Be Divided:

David Crenshaw from Local 10 protests Stockton port officials' plan to erect a fence that would isolate union workers from the rest of the port.



Going Dutch: An ILWU international delegation to Amsterdam stood shoulder to shoulder with Dutch dockworkers in front of the hotel where insurance and pension giant Aegon held its stockholder meeting on April 22. The Dutch dockers union (FNV Bondgenoten), is involved in an ongoing dispute with Aegon, charging the multinational with looting the pension funds of 60,000 dockworkers. Niek Stam, National Secretary of the FNV Bondgenoten, thanked the ILWU for its support, calling the action "an important step in our international campaign against Aegon" and a "signal to Aegon that we are determined to stay focused on justice for workers." From left: Jim Tannock, MUA deputy national secretary; Ray Familathe, Local 13 and ILWU Coordinator of International Relations; Eugene Bandy, Local 94; Conrad Spell, president of Local 23; Adrian Diaz, Local 63.

MEMBERS SPEAK OUT

ILWU's 34th Convention takes place June 8-12, 2009 in Seattle, Wash. We asked delegates to share their hopes for the union.

What would you like to see happen at the ILWU Convention?



"This is my first convention, so with the exception of what past convention delegates have told me I really don't know what to expect. What I hope to see come out of the convention is some progressive action. Given the economic and political climate right now I think there are a lot of opportunities for organizing the unorganized and I'd like to see the ILWU be at the forefront of that. I'd like to see us push for the Employee Free Choice Act as much as we're able, as well as a more functional health care system, because the working world is kind of crumbling around us right now. And then just for my own benefit I'm hoping to meet a lot of new people and make connections with people outside of Local 5, because I haven't had that many opportunities to get to know the union outside of Portland."

**Tove Holmberg, Local 5
Portland, OR**

"I'd like to see us focus on labor unity. We're at a time in history where all of labor needs to unite and become a force in our country again, and the ILWU needs to be a leader in that effort – especially as we commemorate the 75th anniversary of Bloody Thursday. The employers had some success in being divisive among the clerks, foremen and longshore workers, but we've since all realized it's still us against them. We have to be united to maintain the hard-fought gains in our workplace, the benefits we enjoy, and the safety that blood has been shed for. When we have our own house in order, we can become the standard-bearers for labor unity in this country. Especially now that Obama is in office, labor can be part of the solution in helping the economy turn around and building a strong middle class"

**Randy Whitman, Local 23
Fife, WA**



"I'm looking forward to all of us getting together at the convention and coming together as one union. Solidarity is important because morale can go down when there's not much work, like now. This is the kind of situation that can lead to more in-house fighting, so it's up to us to educate members about the importance of sticking together so we can keep moving forward. This will be my first convention. I'm interested to see how all the different parts of our union can come together – including unions from other countries, because I'm concerned about local solidarity and the need for international solidarity as well."

**Larry Manzo, Local 13
San Pedro, CA**

"I've been to Longshore Caucuses, but this will be my first Convention, so I'm looking forward to meeting delegates from other divisions of the ILWU. I look forward to seeing how our union's democratic process brings rank and file delegates together to discuss and debate the issues facing the International and its divisions. The Convention is being hosted by the Puget Sound, Alaska and the IBU, and being a member of the host committee, I would like to see the delegates and their families enjoy their stay during the Convention."

**Dan McKisson, Local 19
Seattle, WA**



An injury to one is an injury to all.

Local 21 Blows the Whistle

Local 21 members picket a company they say is jeopardizing the community and the environment.

Washington's Cowlitz County, which starts on the banks of the Columbia River and rises to the ridges of Mount St. Helens, was once known as the "Timber Capital of the World." Today, most of that timber has been cut, and the traditional logging and manufacturing county is now known as the state's leader in unemployment, which rose to 15.4 percent in April.

Local 21 longshore workers want to see the area rebound with good, family-wage jobs—so they're blowing the whistle on an employer they say is taking advantage of the area's struggling economy to exploit the land and people in crisis.

In 2004 Chinook Ventures bought the buildings on the site of the former Reynolds and Longview Aluminum

smelters. (The land is owned by the global aluminum corporation Alcoa, Inc.) Since then the company has been cleaning up decades of contamination left by the aluminum company, with the aim of developing the 416-acre site into a private storage, shipping and transport facility.

"We started shedding light on Chinook Ventures' business practices because local families need good jobs, a clean river and employers who are accountable," said Dan Coffman, president of the local. "When people hear about how the company is operating, they agree that Cowlitz County deserves better."

In April, Local 21 members who work at the Ports of Longview and Kalama organized an area standards picket at Chinook Ventures' waterfront headquarters. More than 100 supporters from several area unions and organizations held signs that said, among other things, "Your children and grandchildren don't deserve sub-standard wages and benefits."



Risky Venture: Local 21 members Robert Roden, Jake Ford, Chris Holter and Jason Davis are bringing public attention to the business practices of Chinook Ventures, a company operating on a private dock in Longview, Wash.

Union longshore workers start at \$29.04 per hour, and Chinook Ventures owner Barry Oliver told the *Daily News* that his lowest-paid employees start at about \$16 per hour, though he didn't specify whether those wages were for longshore work.

"Our county officials seem too eager to settle for low-wage jobs," said Coffman. "But that starts a race to the bottom that our community can't afford. If we want our young people to stick around, we need to build family wage jobs with benefits and a future right here."

Local 21 is also concerned about Chinook Ventures' many documented violations of air and water pollution. Chinook Ventures claims it is cleaning and restoring the waterfront site, but the company's documented violations against water quality standards during a 2007 inspection painted a picture of anything but a cleanup.

The Washington Department of Ecology cited the company for storing waste materials outside with inadequate pollution prevention controls; spilling product on the ground during loading and unloading operations; tracking hazardous materials throughout the site; and using poor house-keeping practices on-site and at the

pier. This spring, the Department of Ecology fined the company \$150,000; one of the largest fines the state has levied in years. Chinook Ventures is appealing the penalty.

Laurie Davies of the Washington Department of Ecology told the *Daily News* that, "By ignoring state and local permitting requirements, this company is putting people and the environment at risk -- as well as creating an unfair advantage over business competitors who follow the law and permit requirements."

Several residents and organizations are joining the effort to hold Chinook Ventures to higher standards, including Columbia Riverkeeper, an environmental organization that monitors pollution along the region's rivers. The group's Conservation Director, Dan Serres, told the *Daily News*, "This is supposed to be a cleanup site, and it doesn't appear they're doing that."

Coffman said that local longshore workers love the region and are happy to see the broad support for holding the company accountable for how it treats workers and the environment.

"We'll work on this for as long as it takes to improve things for our community," he said.



Unleash Laws: ILWU members, concerned community leaders, and their furry friends have picketed Chinook Ventures for paying its employees low wages and violating several environmental safety laws.

Bloody Thursday: July 5th



Photograph courtesy of the San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

Every July, the ILWU commemorates the series of dramatic events that transformed the face of labor in the United States: Bloody Thursday and the great San Francisco General Strike. For this year's 75th Anniversary, the Bay Area Longshoremen's Memorial Assn. (BALMA), ILWU Locals 10, 34, 91, and 75, and ILWU Pensioners are hosting a full slate of events in San Francisco, including film screenings, historical reenactments, guided walks, art exhibits, conferences, and more. The main event, on Sunday, July 5, is the Bloody Thursday 75th Anniversary Procession and Celebration—a solemn tribute to, as the *Chronicle* described it in 1934, "a stupendous and reverent procession that astounded the city." Gather at 9am at the Music Concourse (across from the Ferry Building) to take part in a procession up the Embarcadero to Local 10 Hall (301 Beach St, SF).

The following is a partial list of additional events. For more information and a complete schedule please visit www.ilwu10.org or call (415) 362-8852 or (415) 642-8066.

July 1 - Aug. 31: *The Men Along the Shore and The Legacy of 1934*; historical art exhibit about the origins of the ILWU. SF Main Library, 6th Floor. Reception Thurs, July 16; 5-7pm. SF Main Library, 6th Floor (100 Larkin St, SF).

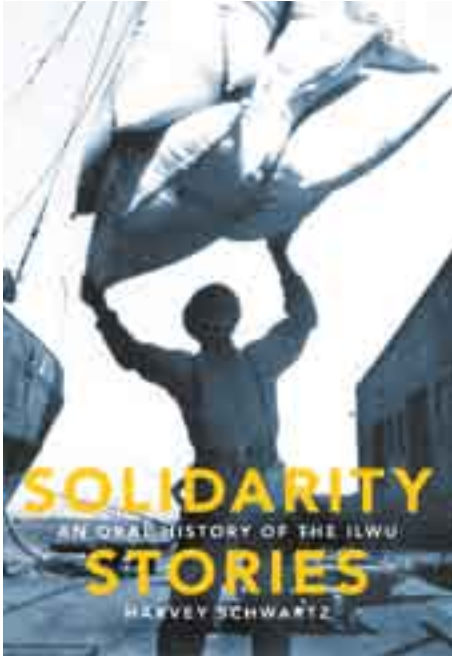
Fri, July 3: *1934 SF General Strike History & Educational Conference*; 9am; Marine Firemen's Hall (240 Second St, SF).

Mon, July 6: *International Labor Conference*, 9am-5pm; ILWU Local 34 Hall; *International Labor Solidarity Night*, unions should prepare to lead a song to sing! 6pm-9pm, ILWU Local 34 Hall (801 Second St, SF).

Sat, Aug. 1: *We Are The ILWU, The Eye of The Storm and May Day 2008*; film screenings, 2-5pm; SF Main Library, 6th Floor (100 Larkin St, SF)

Sat, Aug. 22: *Solidarity Stories: An Oral History of the ILWU*; book signing by Harvey Schwartz, ILWU historian; followed by film premiere of *Bloody Thursday*. 2-5pm, SF Main Library, 6th Floor (100 Larkin St, SF).

BOOK REVIEW



By Harvey Schwartz
University of Washington Press, 2009

Keeping Solidarity Alive

A new book takes a backward glance at the ILWU's organizing history—and issues a wake-up call for today's labor movement.

By David Bacon

The labor movement seems to have lost its way. Today only 12 percent of American workers (and only 7 percent in the private sector) belong to unions; the lowest level of organization since the years before the great longshore strike of 1934. And falling numbers don't tell the whole story. Some labor leaders now say that only huge deals at the top, far from the control of rank and file workers, can bring in new members on the scale needed. To make these deals attractive to employers, they argue, unions have to be willing to make deep concessions in wages and rights, and in our political demands on everything from single-payer health care to immigration reform.

We need some better ideas about how unions should organize—we need to rethink what a union actually is. That's why *Solidarity Stories: An Oral History of the ILWU*, by historian Harvey Schwartz, is such an important book. Here, in the history of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, we can see some alternatives. And we hear these ideas explained by the people who lived by them, in their own words—from rank and filers on the docks, to warehouse workers and field hands, to book clerks and elected leaders of the union.

Solidarity Stories is a remarkable achievement. Workers give gripping testimony about the conditions they hoped to change, and explain how they did it. We hear how the union was organized and how it functioned, from those who built it. We see the crucial role strikes and democracy played in that process. And Schwartz is unafraid to look at the politics of the union's leaders, including activists and black workers fighting racism.

Harry Bridges, the West Coast's most famous labor leader, begins with the story of the 1934 waterfront strike. While the history is familiar to many labor activists and ILWU members, what's unique is Bridges' voice. He doesn't talk like a "labor statesman," although by the end of his life, when the interview took place, employers and politicians tried to treat him as one. But while he was in office, he says, "I always felt that the ones that direct everything is the rank and file. And I'm its spokesman, that's all. The rank and file is the power of the union, see? They're the ones that can shut things down."

"Shutting things down"—the capacity to act on the job, to withdraw labor in an effective way—was the key to building the union. Without the 1934 maritime strike, and those three days in San Francisco during the General Strike when nothing moved without the workers' permission, the union would never have gained the power it needed to make radical changes. And that was the goal. Not just any agreement or the ability to collect dues; not just a list of workers who were members on paper but knew nothing about how to organize and use their power.

Bridges describes those beginning demands. "We went to our rank and file convention that February," he recalls of the months before the strike. "We drew up a set of demands and came out with a program to set up committees, to negotiate, and, if necessary, to strike. Our demands were for a six-hour day, a wage increase, and union hiring halls. So, we come out with a program, and then we set up a negotiating committee."

As Sam Kagel, a union advisor who later became the powerful coastwide longshore industry arbitrator, recalls, they made one other crucial demand: "Once the '34 strike began, and the other maritime unions went out too, the longshoremen expanded their original demands to include the requirement of a settlement for everyone."

Without solidarity all along the waterfront, all along the coast, the strike would have been lost, and the unions crushed. In *Solidarity Stories*, strikers describe how they held out for a coastwide agreement for all unions, when employers would readily have agreed to local settlements.

Organizing Then and Now

These are not just past controversies—they are the crucial issues for labor's future today. Some advocates for the top-down approach say setting up committees of workers is unnecessary and slow. They argue that workers in a single workplace can't see the bigger picture and put their selfish interests above the larger interests of the union as a whole.

Longshore, transport and warehousing have changed beyond recognition, but modern ILWU organizing campaigns are based on the same ideas; help workers organize on the job and build an organization they run themselves. Workers, not staff organizers, at RiteAid's huge Lancaster warehouse, decided when to hold (and win) their union election. Mary Winzig, a rank-and-file leader who played a critical role in organizing workers at Powell's Books in Portland, says she and her coworkers chose the ILWU for its democratic practices. "Some of our group had looked into the history of the ILWU and learned about its militancy and support for different causes." They arranged a meeting with an ILWU organizer, and after listening to what he had to say they signed cards that night.

The institutions born in 1934 made it possible to balance local with union-wide needs, and democracy with centralized bargaining with all shipping employers on the coast. Today even the smallest long-

shore locals elect delegates to the longshore caucus and pass resolutions on bargaining demands. Those delegates hash out a common program, elect the bargaining committee, and sit down with employers. Any agreement must be ratified by vote.

The ILWU pioneered other organizing ideas that today's organizers have "rediscovered." In Hawaii, former Wobbly Frank Thompson helped plantation workers set up a union organization right after they signed up. When workers elected a chair of one nationality, he convinced them to include officers of other nationalities in order to build interracial solidarity.

According to Lou Goldblatt, who served as ILWU's secretary-treasurer from 1943 to 1977, "[Thompson] would go to these plantations one by one and conduct a rehearsal election. He would put out a sample ballot, call a meeting, and say, 'We are going to vote. Everyone gets a secret ballot.'... Well, the NLRB election results speak for themselves. We had entire plantations that voted unanimously."

"These are not just past controversies — they are the crucial issues for labor's future today."

Those elections were just the prelude to the big strike that everyone in Hawaii knew was coming—and it was the strike that forged the union. "The '46 strike brought all the groups together as a fighting force, where they won a major struggle for their life. We'd either get over the hump or that was it," Goldblatt recalled. "One thing winning the 79-day '46 strike taught the sugar workers was that they could be damn self-sufficient and they could take a long beef if they had to. They could survive."

The strike of '46 fundamentally changed the relationship between workers and Hawaii's sugar and pineapple barons, laying the foundation for the political machine that eventually won statehood.

Confronting Racism

Building solidarity among members was not an easy process, and the voices in *Solidarity Stories* draw attention to one of the biggest obstacles: racism. Black workers

had to fight their way onto the waterfront, and into good jobs in warehouses. The union was their vehicle, but they also had to fight for their rights in the union itself.

African Americans came onto the Los Angeles docks during World War II, but after the war the promise of continued employment was unfulfilled for many. The "500 unemployed" lost their jobs with the complicity of the conservative leadership of the longshore local. While they fought a long battle back onto the docks, one of their strongest allies was Warehouse Local 26, which helped them survive by dispatching them through its hiring hall. Some workers even sued the union, a controversial decision, but their objective wasn't a monetary settlement, but to become full and equal members.

Racism is an uncomfortable topic for many unions; *Solidarity Stories* makes an important contribution by describing the way rights and equality were won in the ILWU. Change came about because of the persistence of the African American workers. But the struggle for equality and democracy also made the ILWU stronger because white leaders like Bridges, and "white progressives" in the membership, supported them.

Cleophas Williams, an African American who became president of the San Francisco longshore union, says, "Local 10 was the most democratic organization I've ever belonged to. If you wanted to go out there and face that membership and campaign and work with them and related to them, that was your challenge, and you won and you lost... This union was the greatest thing in my life, other than my family. In terms of economics and social growth, this union was a platform on which I made my stand and found a place in the sun."

Equality in the union helped the ILWU to develop the power of workers where they lived, and the community around the union became more than just an ally. "We found that, in a sense, the union is the community," says Bill Chester, the ILWU's first African American international officer. "We went into every aspect of community life... We were pretty well established by the 1950s as a group of workers who didn't just look at their own selfish points of view as far as what they had economically. We were willing to participate and spread the experience that we had learned in the trade union movement."

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TRANSITIONS

NEW PENSIONERS:

Local 8: Stephen W. Hanson; **Local 10:** George F. Bell, Richard I. Ross, Charles H. Devine; **Local 13:** Carl E. Brown; Felix Mendoza; Enoch Nixon; Robert H. Caughlin; Leonard Graham Jr.; Robert McKenna; **Local 19:** Kristian B. Jacobson; **Local 23:** George W. Johnson; Steven T. Miller; Thomas F. Anderson; Curtis L. Winnie; **Local 27:** Michael R. Caso; **Local 29:** Josefina Pelayo; **Local 52:** Phillip N. Acosta; Barry L. Brockmann; **Local 63:** Anthony Tomich; Jack S. Cukrov; Walter S. Hollingsworth; Fred Rodriguez; Paul R. Brown; Randy M. Meikle; Jimmy C. Davenport; Richard Nervik; John Trutanich; Tony Nuno; Anthony Raquel; Leon Lawler; Anthony Wells; Robert O'Connor; Larry Taylor; **Local 94:** Arthur G. Walters

DECEASED & NEW SURVIVORS:

Local 4: Leo L. Martin; **Local 10:** L. Marsigli; Robert Mc Crae; Gary L. Rand; Charles A. Anderson; **Local 13:** Milojko Teofilovich (Olga); John T. Godfrey; Wilbert Moore; Stanley E.

Todd; Gerald D. King; **Local 14:** Laurence L. Smith; **Local 19:** Arthur R. Almer (Haeng); **Local 21:** Floyd E. Rasmussen (Vermona); **Local 21:** Danny L. Dunivan (Constance); **Local 34:** Jose M. Garitano (Catherine); **Local 53:** Joseph A. Johnson (Patricia); **Local 54:** Charles Robertson; **Local 63:** Neal Randolph (Melanie); **Local 94:** Richard Araujo (Kimberley); James North; Fred B. Ponce; Lloyd Gadlin; Frank P. Agundez

DECEASED SURVIVORS:

Local 8: Violet Krismer; Irma E. Ewen; **Local 10:** Cornelia Cabral; Eva Saldana; Wilma Gulley; Ramona Fernandez; **Local 13:** Martha E. Sullivan; Mary Oreb; Joann Giacomuzzi; Charity R. Codd; **Local 19:** Margaret L. Wittmier; Julia A. Tiekamp; Audrey Doremus; **Local 21:** Delores Ashburn; **Local 23:** Kathryn Halko; Edna B. Lee; **Local 34:** Elizabeth Seelig; **Local 40:** Gladys I. Hoff; Bonita B. Jones; **Local 63:** Louise K. Kuhn

BOOK REVIEW

Keeping Solidarity Alive

continued from page 7

Lessons Of the Past

Harvey Schwartz's courageous oral histories are loyal to the real history of the union. "Down through the years," recalls Jack Olsen, "the ILWU has been a refuge for radicals who were run out of everywhere else. As a result of the policy to protect everybody regardless of political affiliation, many were able to get work...to me that's the key to why the ILWU was always a radical organization."

All along the coast the ILWU had a close and complicated relationship with radicals, not just in big cities and the islands, but also in tiny coast towns like North Bend, Oregon. "Around 1950 some people started calling us 'reds,' but that was something you kind of had to get used to," remembers Valerie Taylor, who organized the Women's Auxiliary there. "The FBI knocked on your door every few months. ... The name 'left-winger' stayed attached to me around this area, I think, because I was on all the picket lines. Whenever I'm around town, I still join em. ... Somebody has to do these things. I was certainly never by myself."

The union also fought the prohibition in the Taft Hartley Act forbidding Communists from holding union office, and Archie Brown, a San Francisco longshoreman, successfully fought a case to the Supreme Court.

The left still takes a bad rap in labor, where unions often denigrate the need to educate workers about politics and fail to inspire them with a vision of real social change. But we need the idea that another world is possible, along with the fresh ideas of democracy and militancy that radicals brought into the ILWU.

Because of the span of time covered by the book, some parts of the union's history couldn't be given full attention, such as the unique contribution of the Filipinos of Seattle and Alaska—Chris Mensalves and Ernesto Mangaoang, who organized the Alaskan fish canneries during the witchhunts, and Gene Viernes and Silme Domingo, who gave their lives to create new bonds of solidarity with unions in the Philippines. The book also leaves at least one important question unanswered: How can the union revive the solidarity and organizing energy of its famous March Inland?

But no book like this can be truly complete; nor is it ever finished. Solidarity Stories challenges the union to make greater efforts to preserve the history of its own members—and the ILWU does much more than most. If we don't learn from our history and pass it on, we are denying it to our successors, who nevertheless must make the lessons of the past relevant in a new era.

Former labor organizer David Bacon is an award-winning photojournalist and author who lives in Berkeley, Calif. Comments are welcome and encouraged. Email to: editor@ilwu.org. Solidarity Stories will be available soon from the ILWU. Watch forthcoming issues of the Dispatcher for pricing and order information.

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

BOOKS

A Spark Is Struck: Jack Hall & the ILWU in Hawaii. By Sanford Zalburg: 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).

Along the Shore/Por la Costa—ILWU Coloring Book. A bi-lingual English/Spanish coloring book about waterfront workers and their union. Originally developed by the California Federation of Teachers' Labor in the Schools Committee in consultation with member Patricia Aguirre and the ILWU Local 13 Education Committee. Meets K-3 classroom standards for History and Social Studies. Two (2) for **\$5.00**

The Legacy of 1934: An historical exhibit by the ILWU. Produced as a catalogue to accompany the new traveling historical art exhibit about the origins of the ILWU in the 1934 maritime strike, this 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 Bolerium 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 longshoring in the ILWU. **\$20.00** (paperback)

A Terrible Anger: The 1934 Waterfront and General Strike in San Francisco. By David Selvin. Perhaps the most comprehensive single narrative about the San Francisco events of 1934. **\$16.50**

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

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