by Tom Price

Sam Kagel was a friend of the ILWU even before the union was organized. In his 70 years on the waterfront, Kagel was present at the birth of the union out of the fire of the 1934 strike, and he would later become the Coast Arbitrator, interpreting the contract he helped found for both labor and management.

He was born in San Francisco in 1909 to parents who escaped from Czarist Russia and its anti-Jewish pogroms. He grew up in Oakland, near the docks, and social ferment was in the air. He lived a few blocks from the Industrial Workers of the World reading room, which the police raided. At about the same time his mother Zelda refused to give the cops the minutes of the meetings of the Workingman’s Circle. She was secretary of that strike-support group. His father Hyman ran a store while Sam worked delivering produce, occasionally slipping purloined watermelons to IWW vagabonds when he was a kid.

While still a graduate student at UC Berkeley, Kagel got a job in 1932 at the Pacific Coast Labor Bureau, an outfit that provided legal and organizational help to workers.

Through his work at the Bureau Kagel soon met Harry Bridges. Bridges and Kagel together would soon learn the value of organization and teamwork as Bridges’ brilliant strategic skills joined up with Kagel’s tactical expertise.

Kagel’s office passed out a union recognition petition and longshoremen up and down the Coast signed up to join the International Longshoremen’s Assn. The union’s demands were simple: end the “fink halls,” the phony company-unions; end the morning “shape up,” where workers had to fight and bribe their way into jobs; establish a six-hour day with a pay raise; and establish a Coastwise agreement. The maritime employer’s resistance to these demands led to the Big Strike of 1934.

Soon after the strike began Bridges was chair of the Joint Maritime Strike Comm., and Kagel—25-years young—was a member, representing the Marine Engineers Beneficial Assn. The cops and scabs killed six men up and down the Coast, but the union held firm. In San Francisco a general strike ensued after two men were killed.

“I can still see the general strike of July 16-19 held to protest the killings,” Kagel once said. “I can still see it and feel it.”

Roosevelt appointed the National Longshoremen’s Board to arbitrate the longshore strike. Kagel helped prepare the testimony for the workers’ star witness—Harry Bridges. They sat for hours over a bottle of Old Quaker whiskey, going over every detail. The Board ruled for the union’s basic demands. The West Coast ILA became the ILWU in 1937.

One of the Board’s actions was to set up arbitration for local disputes, and later, in 1948, Kagel would assume the newly created post of Coast Arbitrator. He kept that job until 2002. During those years he established labor arbitration as an art and science, handing down thousands of rulings in the longshore industry and rulings groups as diverse as the National Football League and the International Ladies’ Garment Workers Union. Former Coast
Countdown to longshore bargaining

By Robert McElrath
ILWU International President

The Longshore Division Caucus was held April 30-May 4 at the Holiday Inn on Van Ness Ave. in San Francisco. Several topics were discussed and I will address in this article two subjects: 1) Early longshore negotiations and, 2) The National Labor Relations Board case concerning the changes in the amount of longshore pro rata and per capita payments by non-member Class ‘B’ longshore workers to the Union.

First of all, a brief history of the timeline for previous Pacific Coast Longshore Contract Document (PCLCD) bargaining. Normally, the Longshore Division has a two-week caucus to prepare for bargaining, where we put together a package of resolutions brought from the Locals up and down the coast. Each one is introduced and discussed on the floor, with a final vote to either accept or reject the resolution. All resolutions that are accepted are then given to the Officers, Coast Committee, and the Negotiating Committee (selected from the Caucus) to prepare and present to the employers. This usually occurs in the first part of May, giving the parties about two months—May and June—to negotiate an agreement before the Contract expires on July 1.

Research shows there has been only one official set of “early” negotiations, in October 1970. The Caucus authorized early negotiations with the Pacific Maritime Assn. (PMA) for the 1971 expiration of the 1966 “Second Mechanization and Modernization (M&M) Agreement.” Early negotiations were broken off in January, 1971 and resumed a few months later.

For the current contract, the employers first expressed a desire to finish bargaining by December 2007, and then changed their request, asking for negotiations to begin in early 2008. After agreeing with early bargaining, the Longshore Division will hold its negotiating Caucus, known as the “Contract Caucus,” in January or early February, and begin bargaining in March. This schedule gives the Negotiating Committee about four months to obtain an agreement. It will clearly demonstrate that the ILWU is taking the concerns of everyone involved very seriously. It will also demonstrate that the Union is doing its part to minimize the chance of an interruption of commerce by other side.

As we all remember, the 2002 lockout by the employers was the first time in American labor history the government took all steps necessary to implement the reduction by the June 1 deadline.

With respect to the refund, each individual who is or was a nonmember class ‘B’ worker during the settlement period has the right to accept or reject the refund on a totally confidential basis. The Union will have no idea who rejects and who accepts the partial refund: only the Labor Board will know this and they will keep it confidential. The Union must assure everyone that the choice to accept or reject the partial refund is entirely up to the individual, free from any threats, coercion or intimidation.

However, the Union needs to equally stress to all individuals eligible for the refund the importance of choosing to reject their share of the refund so that the money may be returned to the Coast Pro Rata Committee for ongoing programs vital to the welfare of the Longshore Division, including especially upcoming 2008 contract negotiations.

Having myself been a B-man for five years, I was not allowed to vote or run for office. But we paid our dues, we listened, and we learned how the Union is run and held together.

...
Remembering the fallen in San Pedro

By John Showalter

The Southern California Pensioners Group (SCPG) hosted its annual memorial to many longshore workers who have died on the job over the years at the Ports of Los Angeles, Long Beach and Port Hueneme on May 15, 2007 in John Gibson Memorial Park in San Pedro, California. The day marked the 73rd anniversary of the murders of Dickie Parker and John Knudsen, the first two West Coast longshore workers killed by police and scabs during the Waterfront Strike of 1934 in San Pedro.

Local 17 Coast Committeeman Ray Ortiz, Jr. shared the stage with ILWU Vice President Joseph Radiszch; Southern California Pensioners Group President Al Perisho; Local 17 President Mike Mitre; Local 63 President Joe Gasperov; and Local 94 President Danny Miranda, and others. Pensioners Lou Loveridge and Art Almeida served as the program’s Chairman and Master of Ceremony, respectively. Los Angeles City Councilwoman Janice Hahn (D-15th Dist.) sent a representative.

“We can’t forget who we are,” Ortiz reminded audience members which included pensioners from Locals 13, 63 and 94. “We are labor and we work for a living. The day we forget that is the day we start having problems in our struggles in California and nationwide.” Ortiz dedicated his remarks to his father, Ray Ortiz, and to Pete Velasquez, a deceased longshoreman who was de-regis-
tered under the Modernization and Mechanization Agreement of 1960.

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John Joseph Royal, former Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the Fishermen and Allied Workers Union, Local 33, ILWU, described the violence he saw as a young boy on the waterfront in 1934, when police patrolling the docks would push the City of Los Angeles for a development. A vivid confirmation of this truism was exemplified at the funeral of Richard Parker. Just one week ago this boy of 20 was buoyed by the ant spirit approaching the threshold of a brilliant career, where success was wholly dependent on his own endeavors...It was the irony of fate that Dick Parker, who had just joined the union, should be the one to die, by being shot through the heart.”

“Remembering the fallen,” said SCPG President Perisho, “but to honor each other.”

Coast Committeeman Ray Ortiz Jr. at the memorial.
Longshore Caucus prepares for negotiations

by Tom Price

The Longshore, Clerk and Walking Boss Caucus met April 30 through May 4 in San Francisco to set the course of the Longshore Division through 2008. The Caucus is comprised of 55 delegates and presided over by International President Bob McEllrath, Mainland Vice President Joe Radich, and Coast Committeemen Ray Ortiz Jr. and Leal Sundet.

The delegates, elected from up and down the coast, debate policy and provide direction for the Coast Committee and the Longshore Division of the ILWU. International Vice President, Hawaii Wesley Furtado and Secretary-Treasurer Willie Adams, who is a delegate from longshore Local 23, also attended.

President McEllrath called the Caucus to order Monday morning. He began by saying the Longshore Division was moving by “legal and bounds” with longshore Local 13 reaching 8,000 registrants in the near future and the Division reaching 14,000 coastwise.

“The membership needs to be educated about medical benefits, pensions, and on being good trade unionists,” McEllrath said. “Concerning the upcoming contract negotiations, our main issues will be maintenance of benefits and the hiring hall.”

By the end of the week, the delegates had a plan to prepare the union for upcoming negotiations with the employers, the Pacific Maritime Assn. (PMA). In preparation, the delegates addressed major topics such as member education, legislative action, safety, publicity and international solidarity. Another caucus will meet before actual negotiations begin.

The Caucus voted to authorize the International President and the Coast Committee to establish a timetable for negotiations with the PMA. Bargaining issues like maintenance of benefits and the hiring hall were also on deck.

The Caucus took action sustaining the education and political actions programs—building international dockers relations with Mexico, and supporting longshore workers in Canada. The Caucus answered president McEllrath’s call to fund a positive public campaign with a million dollars. The Caucus also discussed the Transport Worker Identification Card (TWIC).

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Chair Dennis Brueckner, now with walking bosses’ Local 91, read the Education Committee’s report. The Longshore Education Class project is gathering educational materials from the locals and the Coast Committee will decide on funding and distribution, the report said.

Last April the committee proposed holding “Contract Grievance and Arbitration Procedures Workshops.” This year’s report recommended holding these at times coinciding with local elections. These workshops will train new local officers and members in handling arbitrations and grievances and provide them with tools for effective leadership.

The report recommended “Contract Preparation Workshops” be held up and down the coast after the Contract Caucus and before 2008 contract bargaining. A new proposal for a B registrant educational program, to be piloted this summer, was approved.

The Caucus moved to commended Brueckner for his many years of work for the Division as a member and later chair, of the Education Committee. It passed unanimously.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

ILWU Canada President Tom Dufranse informed the Caucus of Canada’s longshore bargaining difficulties and read into the record the International Executive Board’s Statement of Policy in support of Canadian negotiations (see story p. 3). The Caucus moved to support Canada in its negotiations.

“This is a good motion,” McEllrath said. “The International Executive Board will be in Canada (for its next meeting) to support you.”

McEllrath discussed meetings between the ILWU and Mexican dockers’ unions. The employers want the cheapest labor, McEllrath said. “The ILWU wants to bring these workers up.”

The ILWU will host the International Dockworkers Council’s General Assembly this August.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

The PR committee is moving from the “inside game” to the “outside game” as the year progresses, the report said. That means a movement towards media production, such as video and ads for radio and TV. These ads will stress the members’ many contributions to their society. Training for media spokespeople will continue and the committee will develop talking points on port security, saving lives, goods movement, safety, industry productivity and profitability, and health care.

Local 142 Secretary-Treasurer Guy Fujimura showed TV ads the ILWU used in handling arbitrations and grievances. McEllrath also addressed the ILWU’s Political Action Fund. Pensioner Local 23’s Mike Jagielski urged everyone to allow workers to get card-check recognition.

Political Director Peter Peyton, marine clerks Local 63, reported on the Political Action Fund, Pensioner Local 20’s Longshore Local 10, presented its report, and he commented that a safe workplace is a prime issue. The regulations are “writ-
ten in blood,” he said.

The committee reported on Victims of Terrorism and the lifting of two containers at a time. The union remains opposed to that prac
tice because it is inherently unsafe to use semi-automatic twistlocks as hoisting gear instead of certified lifting mechanisms on the crane’s spreader bar. OSHA is expected to issue regulations soon on this prac
tice, the report said.

The committee reported that particulate matter tests have been completed and the results have been linked from the ILWU web site under the Coast Safety Comm. link. The committee will push for “green” ports through negotiations and political lobbying, the report said.

PENSION AND WELFARE BENEFITS COMMITTEE

The committee reported on a proposal from last year’s Caucus to review a proposal for an ILWU Life Insurance Program. Based on meet
ing with legal counsel, the Coast Benefits Specialist, the union actu
yary, the Brothers, and a company that designs life insurance programs, the committee unanimously recommend
going ahead with the program. The Caucus approved, with the proviso that it should include pensioners.

Throughout its discussions, your committee was guided by, and recon
firmed, the Division’s absolute com
mitment to Maintenance of Benefits (MOB), our Defined Benefit Pension Plan,...,” the report said.

GENERAL BUSINESS

Before getting down to work Monday morning the Caucus observed long-standing tradition by taking a moment of silence for fall
en brothers and sisters. Longshore Local 19’s Joe Aliseo, longshore Local 23’s Ken Eddo and the 56 members listed on the plaque of the Southern Calif. Longshore Memorial were honored. The Caucus also remem
bered Arbitrator David Selvin. Local 13 brothers Chuck Brady and Kevin Schroeder, who were ill, were also honored, as were the people recently murdered at Virginia Tech Univ.

The Caucus voted to attend the May Day rally for immigrant rights and to set aside time to view a model of the statue of Harry Bridges.

Coast Benefits Specialist George Romero spoke on the Alcohol and Drug Recovery Programs and their value to members in need. He introduced ADRP Coast Director Jackie Cummings. She introduced Directors Norman McLeod, Donnie Schwendeman and Jim Copp. Cummings spoke on the success of their work in recovery issues and she commended Jim Copp, who will retire this year after 27 years in the program and 41 years overall. Romero intro
duced the workers at the ILWU-PMA Benefits Plan Office, who received a standing ovation for their years of ser
vice. He also discussed the situation of benefits generally.

“Our Welfare Plan expenses have risen dramatically as stated in the Coast Committee Report, and are projected to increase further in the face of rising costs and the lack of a positive national health care policy,” Romero said.

Tuesday morning’s session began with a moment of silence in honor of Congresswoman Juanita Millender-McDonald’s passing.

“She has helped Local 13 through
out the years and is one of the few people who are honorary members of ILWU Local 13,” Local 13 President Mike Mitre said.

President McElrath began the Tuesday afternoon session with soli
arity greetings from Faddy Crumlin, National Secretary of the Maritime Union of Australia. The Caucus also received greetings from the Congress of South African Trade Unions. The Tuesday afternoon session began with President McElrath introducing Senator Joe Biden Jr. (D-
Del), a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination.

“At age 29, against almost impos
sible odds, he became one of the youngest people ever elected to the U.S. Senate, bearing an incur
ment Republican,” McElrath said. “He never forgot where he came
from. While most Senators live in Washington, he commutes home every
ight using public transportation to
be with his wife of 30 years, Jill.”

“I became a Senator because I couldn’t get a [union] card down at the Port of Wilmington [Delaware],” Biden said, to laughter and applause.

“You all think I’m kidding, don’t you? “Look, all kidding aside, I am a U.S. Senator for one reason, because of
organized labor. That is no malarkye. That’s not being solicitous with you.”

He also said the Bush adminis
tration was doing everything in its
power to weaken organized labor.

“You are the only thing to keep
the barbarians outside the gates,” Biden said. “There is nothing, noth
ing that stands before big business owning the whole deal. You are the people who built the middle class. Labor is the middle class.”

Biden discussed his opposition to
the Iraq war and told the Caucus his plan would be to work with Islamic
states to separate the major Iraq fac
tions under a federated government and withdraw American troops.

The Caucus reconvened after the applause for Biden subsided. George Romero announced his retirement, to
take place after the 2008 negotiations. The Caucus approved the appoint
ment of Local 15’s John Castaño to fill the position.

Local 13’s Greg Mitre read the
Cruise Ship Comm. report. The ILWU protected dockside work in Alaska by getting cruise ship jobs under union jurisdiction. Local 10’s Mike Villeggiante emphasized that cruise ship work puts the ILWU directly in contact with the public, and “we need to present a positive view of longshore
men,” he said.

Project Organizer Jan Gilbreth presented a show slide on Alaska orga
nizing. The Caucus moved to continue supporting Alaska organizing.

Mike Mitre, Local 13, read the Port Security Comm. report. He rec
ommended continuing to establish relationships with the Coast Guard and
maritime entities. President McElrath said the TWIC program will be implemented and the union is working to get one consistent TWIC program for all ports.

Friday’s session began with Romero introducing the last group of BPO workers to the Caucus. The Caucus approved the Budget Comm. report and moved on to resolutions. Honored guests included International President Emeritus Jim Spinosa, ILWU Canada President Tom Duftresne, Local 142 President Fred Galdones, Oahu Longshore Unit Chair Nute Lum, longshore Local 500

President Rich Austin, Pacific Coast
Pensioners Astern honored, for your strong support of the Employee Free Choice Act.

“We are pleased that you earned the AFL-CIO’s 2006 Paul Wellstone Award for your strong support of the Employee Free Choice Act.”

“We are also impressed by your initiating the Health Care debate and forc
ing all of the candidates to speak on the issue. Health care reform to the ILWU is a huge issue. We know that you are all of the candidates to speak on the issue. Health care reform to the ILWU is a huge issue. We know that you are...”
The credit union has been modeled after the Pacific Maritime Credit Union in Australia, its international counterpart. PMCUC has achieved the global financial dynamic aspired to in Southern California.

The unionization of the staff is the first of several major strategic initiatives as the Port of Los Angeles made its first third contract April 24 and workers unanimously ratified it the same day. They had been working without union representation for more than 50 years.

OCU President John Fageaux, jr. folklore in the new members during the membership meeting at the Cabrillo Marina Room in San Pedro. “I am pleased with the results of the contract as it provides substantial increases in benefits and wages for all new members,” Fageaux said. “Both the credit union and the OCU worked very hard in an effort to reach resolution. I’m looking forward to a healthy working relationship with the ILWU Credit Union.”

All workers will get at least 25 percent wage increases. There will be no co-pays on medicals and each worker will get $250/year for incident medical costs.

A few months ago, Fageaux was approached by a credit union employee who was interested in organizing with the ILWU Credit Union. Workers then held meetings to discuss an organizing campaign. At that point, the OCU Executive Board decided to conduct a card check election, which began the unionization process.

“I would like to thank the Executive Officer of the Credit Union, agreed to the card check election, which the union won with an overwhelming majority on October 6, 2006. Contract bargaining began.

“Our membership expressed [the opinion] that they wanted a union staff in their credit union,” Colemen stated. “Our staff deserved the benefits and protection derived from belonging to a union. We are extremely pleased to be member of the ILWU family.”

Coleman went on to describe the credit union’s long-term objective to become a valuable resource for the ILWU in the upcoming contract negotiations. He expects that unionization will facilitate a relationship between the locals and the credit union that will greatly benefit their common membership base—ILWU members.

June 2007
Longshore Caucus visits an exhibition
‘The Legacy of 1934’

By Maria Brooks, photos by Frank Wilder

A

highlight of last month’s Longshore Caucus was the unveiling of a remarkable photo exhibition, the “Legacy of 1934.” The exhibit in San Francisco recounts the fierce struggle of West Coast longshoremen for democratic unionism and the triumph in 1937 with the emergence of the ILWU. The delegates were the first to view the 250-image collection, which, as they pointed out, was now available to union locals so the display can turn concurrently in different locations.

When the Caucus adjourned for the day, delegates were invited to analyze the presentations and photographs images are permanently laminated.

Tinted in sepia tones, the assembled photographs build, one upon another, into a dramatic story. Images of hook, work tokens and union cards, newspapers, prints and drawings document the events that affected a generation of longshore workers. Brief descriptions guide the viewer through the twists and turns of history.

“Legacy of 1934” was designed as a traveling exhibition. Eventually four sets of the entire exhibit will be available to union locals so the display can turn concurrently in different locations.

By the powerful images.

“If someone doesn’t know the middle of it.”

“He was fair to the industry and

Noting a life of decency and

He remembered his boyhood contact in looking at Life Magazine with black and white pictures. He believes photographs can teach.

“He’s like going on an expensive vacation and never leaving your hotel room.”

“Young people have got to recognize this is our story,” said Dall. “This is not about George Washington or some president suck up to the railroad interests. This story is us.”

Berkman darted behind the crowd, casting a critical eye on his work. For the past few weeks, he has lived with these pictures. He set up the entire display in his living room. There he adjusted and edited the images.

“I’m so busy bringing things that aren’t right off the bat. ‘I like this union, I helped build it, Harry and I have been friends for 40 years, and we learned a lot from each other.’”

“What a lucky guy I was, because I was right in the middle of it.”

A full appreciation of the life of Sam Kagel will appear in the July-August Dispatcher.
**ILWU Book & Video Sale**

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

**BOOKS:**

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 Rotemium Books in San Francisco, which specializes in rare publications and documents about radical and labor history. $18.00

The ILWU Story: unravels 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. $6.50

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

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: new edition of the only comprehensive account of the union’s organizing campaign in the northern California warehouse and distribution industry. $9.00

NOTE: TWO IMPORTANT BOOKS ARE NO LONGER AVAILABLE TO THE ILWU LIBRARY AT A SIGNIFICANT DISCOUNT, BUT MAY BE PURCHASED FROM BOOKSTORES, INCLUDING THE ILWU LOCAL 5 WEBSITE (powellsunion.com)

Workers on the Waterfront: Seamen, Longshoremen, and Unionism in the 1930s By Bruce Neison: the most complete history of the origins, meaning, and impact of the 1934 strike.


**VIDEOS:**

We Are The ILWU A 30-minute color video introducing the principles and traditions of the ILWU. Features active and retired members talking about what the union meant in their lives and what it needs to survive and thrive, along with film clips, historical photos and an original musical score. DVD or VHS version $15.00

Life on the Beam: A Memorial to Harry Bridges A 17-minute DVD of the original video production by California Working Group, Inc., memorializes Harry Bridges through still photographs, recorded interviews, and reminiscences. Originally produced for the 1990 memorial service in San Francisco. DVD $15.00

NOTE: “Life on the Beam” is now available in DVD format through the book sale at this greatly reduced price by special arrangement with the Working Group, and includes a bonus feature on the building of the Golden Gate Bridge.

We regret that U.S. Customs and postal regulations create too great a burden for our staff to maintain book sale service to our members and friends outside the United States.

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