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Looking Back on 2007—Moving Forward in 2008

Por muchos miembros de ILWU, 2007 fue un año de muchos retos y desafíos. En los puertos de LA y Long Beach, los trabajadores de Blue Diamond se unieron para luchar por mejores salarios y beneficios, y nos enseñaron a todos nosotros lo que significa la solidaridad y el poder.

Un año en particular en los puertos de WA, los trabajadores de la empresa Waste Management tuvieron que enfrentar bajas salarios, pero también nos mostraron la importancia de la organización y la lucha por los derechos de los trabajadores.

En el año 2008, esperamos continuar nuestra lucha y nuestro compromiso con la solidaridad. "...we’ll all benefit if more workers can join unions, including the ILWU."
ILWU Safety Committee and feds investigate longshoreman’s death

By John Showalter

ILWU Coast Safety Committee Chairman John Castanho traveled to Savannah, Georgia on Oct. 5 to learn more about the vessel where Local 10 longshoreman Reginald Ross died of injuries while loading containers at the Port of Oakland on Sept. 24.

The accident remains under investigation by the Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the United States Coast Guard (USCG).

On Sept. 25, the Coast Guard left the Port of Oakland just seven hours after Ross was fatally injured aboard the ship. Despite many inquiries from the ILWU, it remains unclear why the vessel was allowed to leave port so soon after the fatal accident, and whether proper reporting and authorization procedures were followed by the ship and officials involved.

Federal regulations require OSHA to be notified when shipboard accidents involving longshore workers involve more than basic first aid.

Letters to The Dispatcher

THANK YOU FROM THE ROSS FAMILY

It was wonderful to see how in times of great mourning, it can bring out the best in people. The Longshoremen are a special breed of people—they look out for their own.

I was astonished at all the love, support and guidance given to our family upon the death of my brother, Reggie Ross, on September 24, 2007.

In particular, I would like to thank Deborah McLeod, Aisha Wright, Craig Merrill, Parker Dailey, Willy Adams, John Showalter, many people who made monetary contributions, and, of course, all of the Bay Area local union as well as the many speakers at Reggie’s memorial service who spoke and sang so eloquently, with heartfelt emotions. I was particularly glad that Reggie’s daughters were able to see this display of love and respect for their father. There are so many more people that I would personally like to thank, but unfortunately I am unable to do so.

—Glenda L. Ross
San Francisco, CA

Dear Editor,

I would like to thank sisters to brother Seymour Weinberg’s letter in the September Dispachter for fingering the “super-liberal” deceptions about illegal immigration and NAFTA being harmless to American workers. They who oppose NAFTA and illegal immigration are not simply racists. The pool of immigrant workers (who are good, hard-working family people) is a time-bomb. Why does our union uncritically follow the liberal line here?

—Richard Schafer
Retired from Locals 10 & 34, Fresno, CA

Dear Editor,

I read with great interest the ILWU has been wrong about NAFTA and immigration, but I think he’s misinformed on both issues. We took a tough stand against NAFTA, and continue to speak out against other “free trade” agreements because they benefit big business at the expenses of workers and the environment.

As far as our view on immigration, I hope everyone remembers that the ILWU was founded by many immigrant workers, including Harry Bridges, who was threatened for decades with deportation because of his political views, his union organizing, and his status as an immigrant worker. Also, the ILWU broke ranks with conservative think tanks in the late 80’s by welcoming and organizing white workers of all races into our organization and by refusing to tolerate segregation and discrimination when many thought it was acceptable.

Today’s illegal immigrants come to the U.S. from any country we choose, not just Mexico. They join unions when they can and are leading organizing drives when they get the chance. Harry Bridges always said that worker unity has to be our top priority, because the bosses are always dividing us. That’s why I don’t see hungry immigrant workers as the enemy, and hope that all of us in the ILWU will do whatever we can as potential allies in our fight for justice, instead of a threat to our union.

With this in mind, I hope we can agree on some solutions.

—Ray Ortiz, Jr.
Coast Committee

Dear Editor,

Dick Schafer is right about the need of the ILWU to re-think NAFTA. NAFTA was dreamed up by conservative think tanks in the late 80’s, by whom we should reject the virtues of deregulated privatization. NAFTA in the past 12 years, by loosening worker protections, has devastated the ILWU Northern California District and ILWU Local 10. When I was still a casual worker, we had to be aware of NAFTAs effects. How can we be allowed to think that we accept illegal immigration when we campaign to keep out the bosses.

—L.E. Yoder
Local 34 retired

Dear Editor,

I read with great interest the response by high schoolers to the “Eye of the Storm” video that appeared in last month’s Dispachter. Programs like this are of much value for educating young people about the labor movement and I would like to see more of this kind of effort.

—Jack Bert
(retired since 1988) Sun City, Arizona

Dear Editor,

After reading the September Dispachter, I thought you might like to see a picture of my local for Local 13 when I was still a casual. It was to be hung in the Memorial Hall but Castanho was refused entry and the piece is presently 18x24 inches and is made with reversed chipped glass.

The blue field inside the ring and abalone represent the oceans and interways of the world. The bold strokes of ILWU create an image of self-confidence, capacity for work, and seriousness. The silver ring around the field symbolize never ending solidarity. The colors red, white, and blue evoke patriotism for our sovereign nation, lest we lose our right to freedom as we know it. Red is for the blood shed by our union fathers. The blue is for valor and our strength to fight for what is right and do what is right when the fight is won. The metals including 23k gold, 12k white gold, palladium, and silver, collectively represent longevity and wealth. The wealth is not only in the wages but primary in the benefits we receive while we work, but most importantly when we retire.

—L.E. Yoder
Local 13
Trust Rite Aid? Think twice!

In front of the Anaheim Convention Center, Angel Warner from the Rite Aid Organizing Committee and more than a dozen friends leafleted attendees at the International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans’ 53rd annual conference.

The Nov. 2 – 7 event drew about 5,000 people. Most of them worked with union health care and pension trusts. Rite Aid set up in the exhibitors’ hall at the conference to market its pharmacy benefits management (PBM) company, Rite Aid Health Solutions. The ILWU, in coalition with 1199SEIU and UFCW, wanted conference-goers to get the big picture on Rite Aid. While the company was busy luring union money to its PBM, it was also busting unions on both coasts. Financial analysts are questioning its future, and the company coasts. Financial analysts are questioning its future, and the company coasts. Financial analysts are questioning its future, and the company coasts. Financial analysts are questioning its future, and the company coasts.

Rite Aid retail workers, pharmacists, and pharmacy technicians. Rite Aid took over more than 1,800 Brooks and Eckerd stores last summer. Under Rite Aid’s contracts with 1199SEIU and UFCW workers in the new stores were supposed to be able to join the union with a simple showing of majority support. But Rite Aid turned its back on those agreements and has been actively fighting the union. It has kept union reps out of the stores, and threatened and intimidated workers—just as the company has done in the contracts with SEIU and UFCW, threatened and intimidated work

staff and activists from the three unions leafleted conference-goers, held a reception, and passed out hundreds of tote bags and water bottles bearing the slogan, “Trust Rite Aid? Think twice!”

—Marcy Rein

Talk to an ILWU Organizer!

Puget Sound—Jon Brier 206-448-1870 (office)
Columbia River—Mary Winzig 503-223-6057 (office)
Northern California—Agustin Ramirez 916-606-4681 (cell)
or Carey Dall 510-846-5368 (cell)
Southern California—Rodolfo Gutierrez 951-757-7424 (cell)
or Carlos Cordon 213-618-1765 (cell)

Trick or Treat visits to See’s Candies

Halloween visitors to a See’s Candies store in the Seattle area included a large green goblin (ILWU Longshore Local 19’s Keith Lowe) and friend (ILWU marine clerks’ Local 52 BA Andrea Stuller) who warned customers that Blue Diamond almonds were lurking inside those delicious confections. Volunteers up and down the Coast visited See’s stores around Halloween. They asked the candy company to use its influence as a big Blue Diamond customer and encourage the almond company to agree to a free and fair union election procedure for the workers at its Sacramento plant.

In Portland, “Rosie the Riveter” paid See’s a visit, warning customers that the almonds in their candy came from working women who can’t get respect from those heartless, anti-union Blue Diamond executives in Sacramento. In downtown San Francisco, the Almond Avenger and Sparkles the Clown joined the other volunteers who talked to hundreds of See’s customers, many of whom were supportive.

“Feed the Community” upholds tradition of giving

Hundreds of ILWU volunteers handed out 80-pound baskets of food to more than 1,500 needy Los Angeles Harbor Area families as part of the union’s annual Season of Giving. In all, the union collected more than $56,000 in donations for food that was provided to needy families on Nov. 20 at the Local 13 Memorial Hall.

“Of the checks I write as a union officer, this is the one I most enjoy signing,” said Chris Villamontes, Secretary-Treasurer of Local 13. ILWU Local 13 longshore, Local 63 marine clerks, and Local 94 foremen provided most of the donations and management for the event. The ILWU Southern California Pensioners Group and ILWU Federated Auxiliary Number 8 also contributed funds and provided energy for the union-run occasion.

This marks the 10th year that ILWU workers, volunteers, and locals in southern California have reached into their pockets to help feed the needy who live near the nation’s busiest ports.

Community leaders joined ILWU officials to kick-off the event with a morning press conference. Supporters included newly-elected Congresswoman Laura Richardson (D-Long Beach), State Senator Jenny Osepeza (D-Los Angeles) and Assemblywoman Betty Karnette (D-Long Beach). Other guests who attended the food giveaway included Long Beach Vice Mayor Bonnie Lowenthal, Los Angeles City Councilwoman Janice Hahn, Long Beach City Councilwoman Tonya Reyes Uranga and representatives from the Los Angeles Port Police, LAPD, and LA County Sheriff’s station in Carson.

“I always join the annual food basket giveaway, said Councilmember Hahn. “They’re committed to feeding the hungry and bringing good jobs to the community so hard-working men and women can feed themselves,” she explained.

Also on hand were Shirley Atencio, of the Wilmington Coordinating Council, which honored the ILWU last year as “Non-Profit of the Year” for the food and toy donation program; Connie Calderon, of the Wilmington Teen Center; and Trini Harris, of Long Beach Head Start.

The food giveaway is one of several charity events organized by the ILWU during the holiday season to help the local community. Last month, ILWU locals 13, 63, and 94 helped raise nearly $150,000 to support the Boys & Girls Club of the Los Angeles Harbor. The “season of giving” will end with a December “toy party” where union volunteers will welcome hundreds of needy kids who get to choose their own toys, starting from among thousands purchased by the union.

A gift from the Boys and Girls Club

Local 13 President Mike Mitre (2nd from right), Local 63 President Joe Gasperov and Local 94 Secretary-Treasurer Frank North (left) displayed a framed artwork presented to the hall for their locals’ sponsorship of the 3rd annual fundraiser for the ILWU/IFPA Boys and Girls Club of LA Harbor. The event generated more than $136,000 in donations from ILWU Locals, the Southern California District Council, the Southern California Pensioners Group, and from the PMA and shippers.
ILWU at TransAfrica celebration

ILWU International Secretary-Treasurer Willie Adams attended the 30th anniversary celebration for the TransAfrica Forum in Washington, D.C. Nov. 7. The ILWU International and the Coast Committee helped sponsor the event, along with other unions and organizations. TransAfrica promotes progressive social change in Africa by working with experts, activists and groups in the U.S. Adams serves on its Board of directors. (photos from left:) Willie Adams with actress Ruby Dee Davis, who received the Pan African Lifetime Achievement Award. Ms. Dee has appeared in countless screen, television, and stage productions, including the new film “American Gangster,” which is gaining buzz for a possible Oscar nomination. Ms. Dee has dedicated her life to the arts, the labor movement, and the fight for social justice, as did her late husband Ossie Davis. (center photo) Adams presented the “socially responsible Journalism Award” to Amy Goodman, host of the “Democracy Now!” program that airs each weekday on more than 500 public stations nationwide and has won acclaim for outstanding investigative journalism and aggressive reporting. (right photo) Actor Danny Glover, who chairs the TransAfrica Board of Directors, has also made social change work an important part of his life and acting career. Glover is an honorary member of ILWU Local 10 and narrated the union’s recent “Eye of the Storm” documentary.

Sacto backs Blue Diamond workers

Blue Diamond Organizing Committee members (front row, left to right) Carlos Saraiva, Eliaser Acosta and Ben Monarque join the crowd at the Nov. 18 community forum in Sacramento, applauding the results of the event. The three men, along with their co-workers Alma Orozco, Gloria Hessell and Larry Newsome, described the impact of Blue Diamond’s anti-union campaign to a panel of Sacramento civic leaders. After listening to an hour of testimony, the eight-member panel recommended a fair and timely union election at the plant under specific rules.

“Something very exciting happened today,” said Rev. Dr. David Thompson, from the Westminster Presbyterian Church, where the forum took place. “As a community, we’re getting more and more serious about seeing a fair resolution to the labor situation at Blue Diamond.”

Dr. Thompson sat on the panel at the forum, along with State Sen. Darrell Steinberg (D-Sacramento), Sacramento City Council member Steve Cohn, Joan B. Lee of the Gray Panthers, Chris Jones of ACORN, Gary Pasmore from the Congress of California Seniors, Professor Paul Burke from Sacramento State University, and Guambry Santillan from Sacramento City College MEChA.

“We believe the labor laws in this country need a thorough overhaul,” Sen. Steinberg said. “But for here and now, we recommend that an election be held with additional safeguards for fairness.” The panel suggested that both sides will agree not to harass or intimidate voters; that impartial persons would oversee the vote itself, and that the parties would agree to community oversight of the whole election process. Panel members agreed to send a letter to Blue Diamond with these recommendations, and report back to the community on the company’s response.

Never forget

ILWU Southern California Pensioners Group Vice President Ray Patricio (left) joins Joe Stahl, one of the oldest West Coast longshoreman, at the group’s annual dinner and dance held Oct. 28 at the Local 13 Memorial Hall. The SCPG honored Stahl, who turned 100 on Oct. 15, and two other pensioners who are both 90: Miguel Salcido and Ray Radcliffe. All received embroidered ILWU jackets and caps from their fellow Pensioners.

In May 1934, Stahl spent the first six days of the longshore strike working on the wrong side of the picket line. But on the seventh day he apologized, joined the strikers, and donated his pay to the union. Stahl spent the summer chasing scabs off the docks. At one point, he confronted a group of replacement workers in 26 cars who had rallied inside one of San Pedro’s toughest bars, then threatened to cross picket lines and break the strike. Stahl convinced all of them to abandon their plans and turn around.
Del año 2007 hasta el 2008

con los líderes de todos los locales de la ILWU—la próxima oportunidad. Estas reuniones—junto con el arduo trabajo de nuestro personal de organización y los organizadores voluntarios de ILWU—nos están llevando en la dirección correcta.

Uso de los mayores retos que presentó fue en 2007, consistía en ayudar a los trabajadores del "Blue Diamond Growers" en Sacramento y a los trabajadores de "Rite Aid warehouse" en Lancaster. Estos trabajadores, y miles de ellos, simplemente querían afiliarse a una unión, pero las leyes y los tribunales han sido “arregladas” para favorecer a patrones contra unión. Tenemos que cambiar ese sistema porque la mayoría de nosotros nos beneficiaríamos si más trabajadores pueden afiliarse a uniones, incluyendo a la ILWU. El número relativamente pequeño de nosotros que tenemos buenos trabajos de unión está sobredominado; solamente el 7% de los trabajadores del sector privado tienen unión. Es por eso que el organizar tiene que ser una prioridad—no sólo porque tenemos más trabajadores reclamando afiliarse a uniones—pero también para proteger nuestros propios trabajos.

Negociar nuestro nuevo contrato de estibadores y jorneros (longshore contract) involucrará muchos puntos, incluyendo el proteger nuestros beneficios médicos y de pensión, mejorar en la seguridad en el trabajo, tratar con nueva tecnología, y empujar por aire más puro en los muelles y en nuestras comunidades.

La lista final de prioridades para el contrato de estibadores y jorneros del 2008 (longshore contract) no será finalizada hasta que el Comité de la Costa (Coast Council) termine su trabajo a principios de febrero. Pero nuestra estrategia básica está clara: mantener a todos informados y mantener la fomentación del apoyo de políticos, del público, y de grupos comunitarios. Trabajadores de muelles, líderes de organizadores, sindicalistas, y desequilibrio de comercio a través del país y alrededor del mundo, negociaciones con Mexicanos, Chinos y otros países para realizar contratos, y harán negocios donde los trabajadores quieran una unión más fuerte.

Esto significa hacer negocios donde los salarios son bajos y los derechos básicos son ignorados frecuentemente. Un reto importante en el año 2008 será mantenernos adelante de esta carrera para que las compañías ganen ventaja sobre los trabajadores de muelles en ningún país. Es por eso que todos trabajando con trabajadores de muelles en México, China, y otros países para poder seguir acercando el "paso seguro" sobre empleadores dondequiera que los lleven a cabo sus operaciones de negocios en el mundo.

Tengo grandes esperanzas de trabajar con ustedes para el 2008, cuando negociaremos por nuestro nuevo contrato, y espero que cada uno de ustedes esté preparado para hacer el trabajo.
Local 23 longshoreman dies on Seattle docks

**DO DEFLIBRILLATORS REALLY SAVE LIVES?**

According to the medical examiner, Dan Miller’s death could not have been prevented by the use of an Automatic Electric Defibrillator (AED). But sometimes defibrillators can help save lives.

Longshoreman Tom Clowers suffered a cardiac arrest on the same SSA terminal in Seattle less than two weeks after Daniel Miller’s fatal heart attack. Clowers was wearing the Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) from co-worker Vanessa Rasberry and electric shocks from an AED unit administered by manager Joey Arnold.

AEDs have saved lives for a long time that installing AED’s on the docks could save lives,” says to ILWU Coast Safety Committee Chairman John Castano.

The union asked the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to require employers to install the devices, but the agency declined to make installation of AED’s mandatory—opting instead to merely recommend their use on docks and ships.

Employers agreed to place AED’s in their grain elevators in Washington and Oregon, as part of the In-House Grain Agreement of 2004. Some employers have voluntarily installed a limited number of AED’s, including SSA that has installed four units on their docks in Seattle—two in the center towers and two at the outgate.

The PNA vigorously opposed the ILWU’s effort to make companies install AED’s during the 2002 negotiations. “The companies compared the cost of the new machines with the number of lives that might be saved—and told us it was too expensive to save just a few lives,” said Coast Safety Chairman John Castano. “It was cold-blooded, but it illustrated how much management values a human life versus their bottom line.” Castano says the Coast Safety Committee will keep pushing to install AED’s on all waterfront terminals and worksites.

**Bridge Control System repair by ARA member.**
Local thanked the Puget Sound and Columbia River District Councils, the International Executive Board, and Secretary-Treasurer Willie Adams for their help. Local 21 members also worked hard to get Brother Dietz elected. He replaces a real estate developer who had been appointed by the current Port Commissioners.

Local 19 is pleased that the Port of Seattle has just secured a 42-mile rail corridor that ensures rail transport from Woodinville to Snohomish. The deal reached in early November was sealed with a memorandum of understanding between King County and the Burlington Northern Railway. The agreement also allows the port to lease the southern portion of the corridor to King County for hiking trails. The port is also planning to acquire the rail corridor, “Local 19 President Secretary-Treasurer Willie Adams said. “We’re glad that the new port CEO Tay Yoshitani is protecting the core interest of the port, and that is shipping.”

The union is supporting other land use issues before the Seattle City Council to protect industrial lands. The union brought 50 longshore workers and families to a recent City Council meeting, Yoshitani said.

ILWU Canadian workers have protested the imposition of unreasonable security screening measures, and the dispute could go to Canada’s Supreme Court and Parliament in Ottawa. The Canadian government wants to require transport workers to undergo an extensive investigation of their past, including checks on past criminal convictions with no relation to security.

“The Transport Ministry would require workers to answer many highly personal, invasive questions. Hearsey testimony could be used to deny a worker an identification card, and without it, he or she could not work on the docks. If the ministry even has “reasonable grounds to suspect” a worker might pose a threat, that person can be denied an ID card and thus denied work. The union took it to arbitration, claiming screening was a condition imposed outside the collective bargaining process. The arbitrator ruled Oct. 29 that it was a federal matter, and he didn’t have jurisdiction. The union moved the issue to the Transport Ministry for hearings. Hearings in Parliament might follow, and ILWU Canada believes there are fundamental constitutional issues that Canada’s Supreme Court might need to decide.

Local 505 welcomed the first container vessel to the new Fairview Container Terminal in Prince Rupert on Oct. 31, 2007," according to Secretary-Treasurer Tom MacDonald. A large group of dignitaries from the global shipping industry was also on hand to greet the ship, the Cosco Antwerp. Representatives from China and Maher Terminals, the operator, watched as ILWU members moved the first containers from the vessel to rail, where they travelled across Canada, then south to Chicago. Prince Rupert is expected to be the quickest ship-to-rail route from the Far East to the Midwestern United States. Cosco is the first shipping line to announce service to Prince Rupert with weekly visits. A second line is expected by January.

Local 505 has increased its work force by a large amount. Last August, Local 505 and the employer, British Columbia Maritime Employers Association, recruited, tested and signed up another 200 individuals, the largest hiring drive in the history of the local. “After more than a decade of decline in hours worked, the tide has finally turned for the longshore workers in Prince Rupert,” MacDonald said. “Union members are once again working full time jobs, with preferred vacations getting three to five days, and it’s only going to get better.”

**Holiday Gifts with special meaning: two films about the history and legacy of the ILWU and the labor movement**

“From Wharf Rats to Lords of the Docks” - a two DVD set of a live performance of Ian Ruskin’s one-man play in front of 1000 longshore men and women. 2.5 hours of special features about the ILWU and the making of the film.

$20 + $ shipping and handling

“To Make a Long Story Short!” – about the life and work of Coast Arbitrator Sam Kagel. 3 hours of interviews, music, photos, cartoons and archival footage about Sam’s life that cover his 55-year career that included 10,000 arbitration cases.

$20 + $ shipping and handling

**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 Larson: A limited number of copies of this out-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 on radical and documentary topics! $10.00

The ILWU Story: 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. $15.00

The Big Strike By Mike Quin: the classic partisan account of the 1932 strike. $16.50


**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 $9.95

Life on the Beam: A Memoir by 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, ILWU DVD Version $6.50

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