



# THE DISPATCHER

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SoCal Celebration: Picnic goes lined up for delicious barbeque at the Bloody Thursday Picnic in Wilmington.

Photo by Robin Deyno

## Honoring the Legacy of 1934

The words “Bloody Thursday” hold special meaning for ILWU members who know how their union was founded 84 years ago when west coast maritime strikers were attacked by police and vigilantes who killed two workers and injured dozens more with bullets and batons along San Francisco’s Embarcadero waterfront on Thursday, July 5, 1934.

Police also clashed that same year with maritime workers in Southern California and the Puget Sound. A total of seven strikers were killed in 1934, including Dick Parker and John Knudson who were fatally shot in Los Angeles on May 15; Seattle strikers Shely Daffron and Olaf Helland were fatally shot respectively on June 30 and July 20; and Bruce Lindberg died in a strike-related attack in Hong Kong. They were among dozens of American union members killed that year by police and employer vigilantes who tried to stop workers from organizing unions and general strikes that briefly shut

down San Francisco, Minneapolis and many workplaces that summer.

Worker solidarity forced West Coast waterfront employers to recognize the union and sign a contract with workers. Ever since, the martyrs from 1934 are honored each year at somber ceremonies and family celebrations up and down the west coast. The July 5th date was also chosen by President Franklin Roosevelt when he signed America’s first comprehensive labor law – the National Labor Relations Act – in Tacoma on July 5, 1935.

### Bay Area events

ILWU members in the Bay Area gather each year outside the Longshoremen’s Memorial Hall, located less than a mile from the site where martyrs John Knudsen and Howard Sperry were shot. This year’s ceremony began with the laying of a wreath, followed by the playing of taps by Local 10’s Scott Barton and arrival of the Local 10 Drill Team. A beautiful solo of the national anthem was performed by Aaliyah Washington-Perry and Bay Area Pensioners President Lawrence Thibeaux served as the event MC who introduced Trevyn McCoy and Vanetta Ham-

lin. They explained how Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. became an honorary member of Local 10 in 1967 before he was martyred the following year in Memphis while supporting sanitation workers who were striking for more respect, safer conditions and better pay. Local 10 President Melvin Mackay and Secretary-Treasurer Farless Dailey spoke about the challenges facing workers in the past and future. Bay Area Longshoremen’s Memorial President Chris Christensen and Treasurer Mike Villeggiante joined Local 34 President David Gonzales and Auxiliary 17 President Clydenia Austin to call for unity against powerful employers and corporate greed. Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf and San Francisco Supervisor Aaron Peskin both saluted the union’s legacy and continuing role in the labor movement. Special guest Erin Watson explained how she and almost 100 co-workers had recently organized a union affiliated with the ILWU at San Francisco Veterinary Specialists – the Bay Area’s largest animal hospital. The event concluded with remarks from historian Harvey Schwartz, followed by lunch and entertainment for children and adults.

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# Tragedy in Longview

**Ship's parted line snaps back in Longview, ending two lives and impacting many more**

**A**t the peak of summer on the Columbia River, a ship's mooring line snapped without warning in the middle of the night, killing two men on the job and injuring two others.

Our brothers who tragically lost their lives were Local 21 Longshore worker Byron "Jake" Jacobs, 34, of Longview, Washington, and Chief Mate Pingshan Li, 41, of China.

Jacobs was a fifth-generation ILWU member and a respected activist in Local 21.

The incident happened when ILWU members were working the ANSAC Splendor at the Port of Longview on June 28, moving the ship along the dock at Berth 5 to secure it for loading.

At approximately 1:30 am, as the ship was being moved into position, the mooring line that connected the vessel to the dock parted, snapping back at a speed of about 750 feet per second. Without warning or time to respond, the line recoiled in two parts, whipping one half toward the dock and the other half toward the ship.

On the dock, the line struck three ILWU members. On the ship, the line struck Chief Mate Pingshan Li.

Sadly, the force of the impact killed Jacobs at the scene. Li was transported to Southwest Washington Medical Center in Vancouver, where he died later that evening. A Local 21 Longshore worker and Local 28 security guard suffered non-life-threatening injuries.

Jacobs leaves his wife, Megan, and their three children: Harlow, age 8; Phoenix age 5, and Monroe, age 1.

Li leaves behind his wife and their 13-year-old child.

## Families and friends say goodbye

Less than 24 hours after the incident, approximately 200 people gathered next to the ship at Berth 5 to pay their respects during a candle-light vigil. Normally closed to the public, the port provided a podium and allowed Jacobs' friends, family and fellow longshore workers to gather for two hours at the site.

Li's wife reportedly flew from China to escort her husband's remains home.

Jacobs' family and friends gathered again on July 6 at the Cowlitz County Events Center, where 500 people heard stories of his love for his family and his dedication to union.

His obituary read, "Byron was a devoted husband, father, son and brother who loved all of his family. He loved coaching his daughter in sports. Byron really enjoyed visiting and vacationing with his father and family in North Carolina, and learning about his Lumbee Indian heritage."

At the July 12 Port of Longview Commission meeting, several commissioners spoke in favor of creating a permanent memorial, and Port CEO Norm Krehbiel recommended working with Local 21 to craft and site an appropriate tribute.

After a moment of silence, Port Commissioner Jeff Wilson said, "We're going to hurt for a very long time."

## EGT Activism

Jacobs was raised in an ILWU home, as his step-father, Billy Roberts, was a fourth-generation Longshore worker. Roberts had left the Longview area after high school to serve in the military, and returned home with his wife, Jill, and her two young sons, Byron and Michael. Roberts joined Local 21 as a hardship as his new family settled in, and over the years, Jill and the boys came to work on the docks as well. After graduating from high school themselves, Byron and Michael Jacobs became fifth-generation members of the ILWU.

With his deep union roots, Jacobs stepped up in a big way when Export Grain Terminal (EGT) attempted to open a massive new grain elevator at the port without ILWU labor in 2011. He became an activist alongside hundreds of supporters in the Pacific Northwest and Coastwise in what became a painful fight to protect ILWU jurisdiction.

Over the course of a year of protests, dozens of ILWU members, officers and supporters were arrested for standing up for the union – including Jacobs, on more than one occasion.

Local 21 pensioner Michael "Kelly" Muller recalled an EGT protest at which he and Jacobs were maced, beaten and arrested by railroad police. The two Longshoremen

had tried to protect members of the women's auxiliary who were sitting peacefully on the railroad tracks leading to EGT when law enforcement started aggressively handling the women.

Associated Press photos of Muller and Jacobs being attacked by police in riot gear became a well known image of the David versus Goliath battle.

The union's fight ultimately succeeded in securing ILWU jurisdiction at EGT, and Local 21 members have been manning the EGT grain terminal since 2012.

"I can tell you that there was no better fighter for the union than Byron," Dan Coffman, who was Local 21 President at the time, told mourners at Jacobs' service. Coffman also mourned Jacobs as the kid he had coached in baseball and who was his own son's best friend.

Current Local 21 President Jake Ford said, "Byron loved his union and his work and will be incredibly missed."

## Waterfront Dangers

The deaths of Jacobs and Li, and the multiple injuries, affected longshore workers in the community and beyond. In 2016, Longview suffered a loss when Local 92 Walking Boss Jim Meadows died while working at the Weyerhaeuser log export terminal. Coastwise, it's rare to meet a longtime Longshore worker who hasn't had a workplace fatality or catastrophic injury hit close to home.

The maritime industry has changed over the centuries, but Longshore workers and mariners have suffered from the threat of parted mooring lines since the dawn of shipping. When synthetic lines part, they do so silently and at a speed which allows no time to prevent injury. Without proper use, maintenance and training, lines can pose a deadly threat.

The June 28 incident remains under investigation by the Coast Guard, Washington State Department of Labor and Industries, and the ILWU Coast Safety Committee. Jacobs' widow has filed a wrongful death suit against the ship owner and operators in the U.S. District Court in Portland.

"There's not a single ILWU member who isn't moved by the two families' losses and the trauma suffered



**ILWU Roots:** Byron Jacobs, seen here in blue, was a fifth-generation member of Local 21. He marched in support of KEX workers in November 2017 along with his step-father, Local 92 member Billy Roberts, brother Michael of Local 21, son Phoenix on his shoulders, and mother Jill of Local 21.



Byron Jacobs is survived by his wife, Megan, and their children: Harlow, 8, Phoenix, 5, and Monroe, 1.

by the witnesses and survivors," said ILWU International President Robert McEllrath. "This split-second snapback has changed the lives of four families and is a tragic reminder of the dangers we face on the docks."

"I remember Byron as a good man who worked hard for his family and his union," said McEllrath. "We will continue fighting every day to make our jobs safer, because the most terrible news is when a parent doesn't come home from work."

A fund has been set up to support Jacobs' family, and contributions may be made to the Byron Jacobs Memorial Account at Longshoreman's Federal Credit Union in Longview.

Jacobs' step-father, Billy Roberts, said, "On behalf of Byron's family, I want to thank everybody in the union for their well wishes and support. I want to thank the ILWU for living up to its motto, 'An Injury to One is an Injury to All.'"

## DISPATCHER

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# ILWU members help tenants fight evictions and build power in Tacoma

When I arrived for my first meeting of the Tiki Tenants Organizing Committee in Tacoma this past April, a group of 50 people were already gathering in the outdoor courtyard and sitting in a circle of mismatched chairs. I didn't see anyone I knew, but was quickly approached by an elderly African-American man who saw my ILWU shirt, greeted me with a smile, and introduced himself.

"My father was a member of ILWU local 10 and I remember running around the union hall in San Francisco when I was a little boy," he said. After growing up, Julius Rance, Sr. told me he had done a stint in the Army, then worked as a "tank-haul" truck driver until retiring. I wanted to learn more, but our conversation was cut short by a woman who introduced herself as an organizer with the Tenants Union of Washington State. She asked everyone to quickly find empty seats and pull-in close together.

The meeting started with introductions and some encouraging words about showing each other respect when we spoke. This was the first time this group of people had met together, and I soon discovered why many were anxious while I listened and took notes about the stories that I heard.

An elderly man who just had back surgery was given 26 days to pack and move.

A blind woman in a wheelchair said she was scared and not afraid to cry about it.

A single mom who'd gone to trade school and joined the Roofers Union in search of a stable job to overcome past debts and get back on her feet, could soon be homeless.

Another person said they had just paid their rent before getting an eviction notice.

It turned out that tenants in 58 units of the Tiki Apartment complex were being evicted; half of them got notices on April 4th with orders to be out in 26 days and the rest had to be gone in May. They discovered that their build-

ing had been quietly sold to a Seattle-based developer called CWD investments back in November. The owner of the investment company explained his strategy to a business publication in 2016: "...buy apartments that need fixing up, rehab them and raise rents." A new property manager, Allied Residential, had taped eviction notices to every Tiki tenant's door, triggering calls for help and organizing. This first tenants meeting was held two weeks after the eviction notices appeared on April 19, so the clock was ticking.

## Organizing muscle

Our first task was to help one of the tenants pack up their belongings and move, which was a difficult job made easier, thanks to volunteers from ILWU local 22 & 23 who are involved with 23's Young Workers Committee. That same weekend we conceptualized and formed the Tiki Tenants Organizing Committee. We made "Housing Justice" buttons, created branding, developed messaging and generated social media pages. We canvassed the apartments and had one-on-one conversations with tenants.

## Mobilizing strategy

On April 24th, we helped mobilize more than 30 tenants to attend the Tacoma City Council meeting. When the tenants got up and went to the podium to speak out, they shook the building with their powerful stories that were raw and emotional. Mayor Victoria Woodards scheduled an emergency meeting just two days later and instructed city staff to draft an emergency ordinance that would delay the Tiki evictions, secure funds and get help from city agencies to support the tenants.

## Important partial victory

On April 26th, the tenants and supporters made history when the city announced an agreement had been negotiated with CWD Investments to reset the eviction clock. The new date would now be June 30th. Tacoma also passed an emergency ordinance, effective May 14th, that temporarily changed the law for all renters who faced "no cause" evictions. Landlords were now required to give 90-day eviction notices. This emergency ordinance will "sunset" or expire, in September.



**Elderly and disabled** tenants are among those being helped from organizing efforts supported by Local 23's Young Worker's Committee.

## "No cause" = no rights and no justice

A "no cause eviction" is just like getting fired at work for no good reason, which is how almost every American workplace operates unless a union contract requires "just cause" (a good reason) and "due process" (requiring employers to follow the rules and respect job rights) before anyone can be fired. Some cities, including Seattle and San Francisco, passed laws 30 years ago that require landlords to have "just cause" before they can evict tenants. Just cause evictions usually requires tenants to repeatedly fail to pay rent or intentionally damage property or make life miserable for fellow tenants. Even with those allegations, a "just cause" eviction process generally includes rights for tenants to appeal and tell their side of the story to a judge. Some activists have suggested that unions could benefit by trying to pass similar "just cause" laws to protect employees at work from being fired at any time for any reason – or no reason, which is now the law unless a union contract says otherwise. Passing "just cause" protections for tenants and or workers would be a big step forward for America's working class.

## Tenants suffer, landlords profit

As things stand now, landlords and developers in Tacoma are evicting tenants whenever they want to remodel buildings, double rents and rake in profits.

This kind of displacement puts tremendous stress on tenants, who are likely to become homeless if they don't quickly find an affordable apartment or move-in temporarily with friends or relatives – creating more stress for everyone involved. And renting a new apartment often requires paying the first and last month's rent plus a damage deposit before you can move in. That kind of money is hard to find for most working class families who have less than \$1000 saved for emergencies and almost nothing saved for retirement. Evictions also put enormous budgetary stress on government agen-

cies and charities. Seattle and San Francisco each spend \$200 million annually on homeless services, and both still fall short of what's needed.

## ILWU supports new reforms

Between now and the sunset date of the emergency ordinance, the Tiki Tenants Organizing Committee is pushing Tacoma to pass a strong list of tenant protections and seeking to make the 90-day eviction law permanent.

We launched a letter writing campaign to demand that the City pass a strong, progressive "Tenants Bill of Rights" – including "just cause" eviction protection – and create a Tacoma Renters Commission. On June 12, we held another citizens forum where letters from tenants and concerned community members were personally delivered to City Council members.

Our support has made a difference, but rank-and-file tenants are in the front of this movement and leading it every step of the way. Powerful new voices and strong leaders are coming alive and being developed in this struggle. We can help with the organizing, but it's been the demands from tenants themselves – along with their vision and passion – that has carried us this far.

With things finally stabilized at the Tiki, we began our own transition and started thinking about the need for more affordable housing and better tenant protections throughout Pierce County. But our time to reflect was limited because the next big eviction was taking place at the Hudson Court apartments in Parkland, WA. We tried to get ahead of the curve there by door knocking, developing tenant leaders and preparing for the next fight. While important and necessary, we also recognize the need to overturn state laws passed during the Reagan era that limit what local governments can do to protect renters. These same kind of restrictions were also passed in California by lobbyists for the real-estate industry and apartment owners. This November, California voters will get a chance

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**Speaking out:** Tacoma's City Council is hearing from tenants who are organizing for justice.

# Honoring the Legacy of 1934

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## Southern California

Wilmington's Harbor Sports Complex was once again the site for this year's So Cal's harbor-area Bloody Thursday picnic. The annual event has grown to attract nearly two-thousand participants, and the Sports Complex is one of the few area sites than can handle the larger crowd and parking. This year's Organizing Committee included Steve Lenares and Melon Cesar Hall.

### Honoring So Cal's fallen martyrs

Like past years, the event began with a morning memorial at the Roosevelt Memorial Park in Gardena where martyrs Dickie Parker and John Knudsen were buried after being shot on May 15, 1934; both died and gave the first blood during a long struggle to establish the ILWU on the west coast. ILWU Poet Laureate Jerry Brady recited a poem commemorating the fallen martyrs, followed by a prayer and reflection on the sacrifices made by workers during the historic strike. When the brief service was over, a group of classic cars and bikes from the Longshoremen's Motorcycle Club left the cemetery and headed to Wilmington for the picnic.

### Wilmington Picnic:

This year's picnic drew almost 2,000 people who enjoyed carnival games, bounce houses, music and other entertainment that was appropriate for the whole family – along with great food that included thousands of burgers, tacos and sno-cones.

## Columbia River

Portland's 84th Annual July 5th Memorial Picnic was held at the Oaks Amusement Park along the banks of the Willamette River. The event was organized with help from Locals 8, 40, 92, Local 5, the Inlandboatmen's Union, Auxiliary 5, the Columbia River Pensioners and the Local 8 Federal Credit Union - who all contributed to the picnic's success. An estimated 1200 family and friends attended throughout the day. Events began with a memorial service where a wreath of flowers was placed into the current of the Willamette River in honor of the ILWU's fallen martyrs, while Paul Grainnard played taps. Later in the day, musical entertainment was provided by Local 8 member Dave Degman & the Rogue River Band. Volunteers served over 1,000 hot dogs, 36 gallons of chili and 1200 ice cream bars. Auxiliary 5 provided entertainment for many by hosting bingo games throughout the day.

A special thanks was extended to Local 8 Vice President Tom Owens and his family for all their help with the event – along with support from Ashley Hill for running the kitchen, Tom Wehage for selling all the raffle tickets, Auxiliary 5 members for operating the bingo games, Steffen Hill and his crew for selling the amusement ride bands, Paul Cole for donating the use of his boat, Local 8 Secretary Troy Mosteller and Local 8 President Bruce Holte and all their family members for helping to make the event a success.



Historian Dr. Ron Magden with his wife Beth at the Tacoma Bloody Thursday Picnic.

### Tacoma:

Local 23's traditional July 5th Picnic at Spanaway Lake Park continued with an even larger crowd this year that seemed to include more families and children. The games for kids were popular, as were bingo games for the older set organized by Auxiliary #35 members. A delicious BBQ lunch satisfied everyone. This year's event was coordinated by Trustees Eric Sowers, Art Jackson and Kyle Copeland along with Dan Witker, Local 23 Pensioners, Auxiliary #35 and a host of volunteers.

### Seattle:

Vasa Park on Lake Sammamish is once again where ILWU members in Puget Sound held their July 5th celebration. Pensioner San Huniu conducted the opening ceremony that honored members who passed during the previous years – along with the martyrs of 1934. A BBQ lunch followed with side dishes and strawberry shortcake. Local 19 member Robert Willis, brought out his fancy corn roasting machine and Local 19 member Mike Callanan grilled some tasty oysters. There was

swimming in the lake, a bouncy castle, water slide, and other games for kids. Local 19's Ali Vekich put together a 50/50 raffle that benefitted the Young Workers Committee. Teresa Neufang gathered great prizes for a raffle that benefitted the West Seattle Food Bank. Both raffles were a huge hit Local 19 member Cosette Hill worked hard to provide awesome shirts and swag for sale at the picnic. The event was well-attended with about 900 who came to the park. Coordinator Sarah Esch sent a "big super shout-out to all the volunteers who made our picnic such a huge success, including Brice and Nicole Lenz, Svava Alumbaugh, Charlie Wilbert, Randy Wilbur, Mark Williams, Kainoa Mokiao, Kullen Fernandez, Warren Fairbanks, April Benjamin, Donald Vanison, James Bump, Joe Toro, Thomas Galloway, Tim Darby, Tyrone Harvey, John Persak, Justin Hirsch, and everyone else who helped load and unload our rental truck." Local 500 member Joulene Tse and Local 514's Mike Parent travelled from Vancouver, Canada to attend the picnic and took photos of the event.



Photo by Jeff Clowers

From left to right: Dragan Butorac, Tony Brett and Art Jackson prepare the barbecue to feed hungry picnickers at the Tacoma Bloody Thursday Picnic.



Photo by Robin Doyno

Southern California ILWU members, pensioners and their families enjoyed a sunny day in Wilmington.



Photo by Robin Doyno

ILWU Auxiliary 8 members raffled off prizes to help raise money for their ongoing work in Southern California.



Photo by Joulene Tse

From left to right: New retiree Mike Hurlock with 500's Joulene Parent and 514's Mike Parent at the Bloody Thursday event in Seattle.



Photo by Robin Doyno

The Southern California picnic featured games, bouncy houses and other entertainment for kids.



Photo by Joulene Tse

Local 19's Robert Willis at his popular roast sweet corn stand.



San Francisco Supervisor Aaron Peskin (L) joined animal care worker Erin Watson. Both addressed ILWU members who gathered at Local 10 in San Francisco to honor Bloody Thursday.

## Showing solidarity for animal care workers in San Francisco

A large group of clients, community leaders, pet owners and union members came out on April 12 to show their support for a successful organizing effort by nearly 100 workers at the Bay Area's largest animal hospital.

The event took place on the sidewalk in front of the San Francisco Veterinary Specialists (SFVS), the Mission District animal care facility that provides critical services such as cardiology and chemotherapy for Bay Area pets. Workers at SFVS voted nearly 3 to 1 in April to form a union and join the ILWU. In the weeks leading up to the vote, workers had to endure an anti-union campaign orchestrated by management that continues to this day as negotiations for a first contract are underway to secure better pay, real benefits, improved training and better retention.

"Improving conditions here will have a direct impact on the animals we care for and people who love them," said Brianna-Lynn De Libertis, an expe-

rienced Medical Liaison at the facility who also serves on her new union's Community Action Team. "The turnout and diversity of support we saw on July 12 was inspiring," she said, citing the participation of so many different community leaders, including two who had a special impact.

The first was Sandra Mack, a SFVS client who brought along her dog – and a pile of pet bills from SFVS. Mack had heard about vet workers organizing at SFVS from her colleagues at the California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA) where she is President of the group's Education Fund. The statewide network represents thousands of senior activists in California, including many in the Bay Area. Mack spoke confidently and was unwavering in support for the SFVS employees, their desire to improve care for animals and improve the value to pet owners who pay the bills.

San Francisco Supervisor Hillary Ronen also attended as the elected representative for the Mission District where SFVS is located. Ronen is a dynamic political leader who is



Community leaders supported animal care workers on April 12. Workers at VCA/SFVS recently joined the ILWU. The company refuses to meet more than once a month for first contract talks.

respected in the neighborhood, Bay Area and larger political world.

Ronen arrived at the event carrying a letter that she wanted to personally deliver to VCA/Mars management. She said the letter called on the corporation to start respecting worker efforts to improve conditions – and cooperate with the new union. She also said Mars/VCA should stop stalling and start negotiating seriously – noting they had only agreed to one negotiating session per month in an effort to frustrate workers. She concluded her talk by asking a group of employees to accompany her as she entered the building to personally deliver the letter to management.

A variety of union members attended, including members of ILWU Local 6 and 10, the Inlandboatmen's

Union, plus Rudy Gonzalez, Executive Director of San Francisco's Labor Council, the body representing 150 different unions with 100,000 members who work in the City.

Another special guest who received a round of applause for attending was Fred Pecker, longtime former Secretary-Treasurer of Local 6 who is undergoing chemotherapy. His attendance on July 12 was warmly received because he has participated in so many worker organizing efforts over many decades.

"I'm glad to be able to make it down to the event," he said. "The energy and determination of these young people is inspiring and gives me hope for the future and our movement for social justice."

**Editor's note:** The following article looks at Chile's disastrous experiment with privatizing their once-public Social Security system. The conversion from public to private was encouraged by Milton Friedman, an economist at the University of Chicago who despised labor unions, minimum wages, Medicare and Social Security.

The possibility that something similar could happen here is real. President Trump's Economic Advisor, Larry Kudlow, says he supports privatization, as does House Speaker Paul Ryan and Ryan's likely replacements. The same people also support privatizing Medicare, the nation's public, non-profit, single-payer health insurance system for older Americans.

After winning the election, President Trump first pushed massive tax cuts for corporations and the super-rich. Then he appointed an anti-union justice to the Supreme Court, and is now nominating a second anti-union justice. In Congress, anti-union members are using the budget deficit they created with the tax cuts to justify reductions and changes to Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. When the mid-term elections are over this November, expect more calls from anti-union politicians to cut and convert Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid into private, profit-making insurance schemes. Wall Street likes privatization because it would generate billions in fees and give them access to massive capital for lucrative investments here and overseas. Privatization would leave retirees responsible for losses in a stock market that experts say is hopelessly rigged against small investors. Understanding what happened in Chile can help us avoid making the same mistake here.

# Social Security Privatization is a disaster in Chile; Anti-union politicians and Wall St. still want it here

More than 20 years ago, *The Dispatcher* warned that an experiment imposed by a bloody dictatorship would fail. We were right, and the Chilean people are angry.

When I last wrote for *The Dispatcher* from Chile in 1996, the private pension companies (known as AFP's) who ran Chile's system of individual pension accounts were already unpopular. Independent economists and union leaders warned then that the system would eventually fail.

The privatized social security system was imposed on Chile in the early 1980s by the brutal, U.S.-backed military dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet. After thousands of murders, widespread torture, imprisonment and repression of once-powerful unions, the country became a laboratory for imposing extreme free market ideas generated by University of Chicago Economist, Milton Friedman. A group of Chilean economists who worshipped Friedman were known as "the Chicago Boys," and they oversaw the sell-off of public-owned companies, deregulation of business and privatization of education, healthcare and Social Security. Chile's public programs dated back to the 1920s and included a comprehensive national healthcare system.

A conservative, young Chilean economist who hated unions, José Piñera, was appointed Minister of Labor. He imposed a new labor code that destroyed the power of unions to stand up for workers and instituted a system of private retirement accounts, financed solely by mandatory 10 percent contributions from workers, and no contributions required from employers. New workers were required to open a private AFP account when they were hired. Existing workers with Social Security accounts were pressured to switch to the private AFP accounts – saving employers two-thirds of the cost they had been paying to fund the Social Security accounts. A one-sided propaganda campaign funded by Piñera's Ministry of Labor and private investment firms eventually made everyone switch.

By 1996, Piñera was co-chairing a well-funded Cato Institute project that lobbied for privatizing Social Security in the U.S. The U.S. media often reported Piñera's claims uncritically, including his assertions that Chilean workers were becoming "the owners of Chile," and would be "rich in retirement." Conservative Republicans in Congress, along with some corporate Democrats, used Piñera's unfounded claims to attack

Social Security and Medicare, which they regarded as dangerous "socialist" programs.

When the Supreme Court installed George W. Bush as president in 2001, the privatizers had a champion in the White House. But unlike Chile, resistance from U.S. unions and allies was able to stop the plan to privatize Social Security and Medicare – at least for the time being.

While I was visiting Chile earlier this year in April, my cab driver, Mauricio Sanhueza, told me, "Things have gotten a lot worse since you were here in 1996." He added, "José Piñera is hated everywhere in Chile."

Piñera had promised Chilean workers that the AFP system would provide 70 percent of their salary when they retired, but this "replacement rate" is now in the 30-35 percent range, says financial advisor Alvaro Gallegos, who served briefly as Superintendent of Pensions under a recent democratically-elected government. "In another decade," he adds, it will be down to 15 percent."

During this year's trip, I asked many people, but had trouble finding any working person who believed that they will be able to retire with dignity under the private system. They know that the AFPs are ripping-them-off with high fees and confusing rules designed to keep pension payouts as low as possible.

Hector Manuel, 75, was working as a hospital orderly and expected a good retirement under Social Security. "I was told that I had to switch" and he "retired" in 2005, but now has to keep working as a cleaner at another hospital. "The more I think about it, the more anxious I get, but I will never be able to stop working."

Seamstress Sonia Garcia, puts it in even glummer terms: "I will have to work until I die. I just hope I can save enough to pay for my coffin."

The Wall Street financial collapse of 2008 brought crisis to Chile as well. The value of private accounts dropped 30-35 percent and set the stage for a massive reform movement. A group of unions stepped-up to create an organization called *No Mas AFP* in 2013, and grassroots organizing began throughout Chile.

"Our second major mobilization, in 2016, had two million people marching in cities throughout Chile, the largest march in our history," says Luis Mesina, President of the Confederation of Bank Workers and a top leader of the movement.



Photo by No Mas AFP

**Mobilizing for a better future:** Citizens in Chile are fighting a failed retirement system that was privatized by the military dictatorship who ruled their country - with U.S. backing - from 1973-1990.

Two million Chileans marching in their nation of 18 million would be the equivalent of almost 40 million people protesting in the U.S.

Last year, *No Mas AFP* ran a nationwide referendum supervised by two universities that ensured that each registered voter could only vote once,

"We had 8,500 volunteers who helped conduct the referendum throughout Chile; union members, seniors, students and even some conservative people," adds Mesina. "The results showed that 1.74 million of Chile's 3 million registered voters participated, and that 96.7 percent of them opposed the AFPs."

But that doesn't mean that fundamental change will come easily.

Dozens of people interviewed for this article had the same response when I asked them if they remembered Piñera promise that workers would become the owners of Chile. Each of them told me, "It is the AFPs that have become the owners of Chile."

The six AFPs—three of which are totally or partially owned by U.S. companies like Met Life and Prudential—control assets equal to about 70 percent of Chile's Gross Domestic Product. They wield enormous political and economic power that holds influence over politicians – and administrations – whether they lean left or right.

The system has been tweaked with various regulations and even contributions of government money to top off investment accounts for those with meager retirement savings.

"But nothing has changed fundamentally," adds Mesina "and the people of Chile will have to build great political power to overcome a very entrenched system."



**Predicting more hardship:** Pension expert Alvaro Gallegos says the privatized retirement system is likely to get worse in the coming years.

Leaders like Mesina understand that it is hard for a movement to sustain a high level of intensity, and a period of more quiet grassroots organizing is now underway. "Our greatest advantage is that pensions keep getting worse," he notes.

Despite this reality, the Cato Institute insists that Chile's system has been a great success and many politicians like Vice President Pence and House Speaker Paul Ryan still favor privatizing Social Security in the United States.

It turns out that General Pinochet himself worried the AFPs would grow too powerful, and that the system of privatized pensions would eventually fail to deliver on promises made by their promoters. That's why he insisted on exempting military and police forces – who are among the few that remain in the nation's once robust public Social Security system.

He may have been bloody dictator, murderer and torturer, but he wasn't a fool.

Fred J. Solowey has written several previous articles for *The Dispatcher* and is now a retired editor and communications director for various unions. He is a member of the National Writers Union, UAW Local 1981.

# Mexicans choose a pro-labor President

The most worker-friendly President in almost a century was elected by a landslide of Mexican votes on July 1st. Andrés Manuel López Obrador – known as “AMLO” – pledged to follow three principles that, if honored, would set him apart from his corrupt predecessors: “do not lie, do not steal, and do not betray the people,” was his promise on election night.

He’s inheriting a country with vast oil and mineral resources but a poverty rate of 50% - compared to about 15% in the U.S., still the highest poverty

rate among wealthy nations. AMLO has promised to increase anti-poverty spending, cut waste and try to recover more revenue from oil and other resources that were mostly public until being privatized 25 years ago – helping to create some of the world’s richest billionaires, including Carlos Slim, worth \$67 billion.

The photo on the right shows retired Local 63 member Lewis Wright, who became a dual citizen of the U.S. and Mexico with his Mexican wife Angelita and daughter Angeles – all three voted for AMLO and have red dye on their finger to prove they already voted. “The extra finger



Andrés Manuel López Obrador – “AMLO” – is now Mexico’s President who formed a new party that pledged to help workers and fight poverty.



in the bottom of the photo came from our 5-year-old granddaughter, Diagna, who has a clean finger,” said Wright. Voters in Mexico are required to put

ink on their thumbs, called “dedos,” to prevent duplicate voting. AMLO won over 30 million “dedos” – more than twice what his nearest rival received.

## Los mexicanos eligen un presidente prolaboral

El Presidente más prolaboral en casi un siglo fue elegido por una mayoría aplastante de votantes mexicanos el 1 de julio. Andrés Manuel López Obrador – conocido como “AMLO” – se comprometió a seguir tres principios que, de ser cumplidos, lo distinguirán de sus corruptos predecesores: “no mentir, no robar, y no traicionar al pueblo”,

fue su promesa en la noche de las elecciones.

Él hereda un país con vastos recursos petroleros y minerales pero un índice de pobreza del 50% - comparado con alrededor del 15% en los EE.UU., que aún así es el más alto índice de pobreza entre las naciones ricas. AMLO ha prometido aumentar el gasto público para combatir la pobreza, tratar de recuperar más ingresos del petróleo y otros recursos que fueron

principalmente públicos hasta que se privatizaron hace 25 años – lo cual facilitó la existencia de algunos de los multimillonarios más ricos del mundo, incluyendo Carlos Slim, cuyo caudal está valorado en \$67 mil millones.

La foto a la derecha muestra el miembro jubilado del Local 63, Lewis Wright, que tiene la doble ciudadanía estadounidense y mexicana, acompañado de su esposa mexicana Angelita e hija Ángeles – los tres votaron por

AMLO y tienen tinta roja en sus dedos para demostrar que habían votado. “El dedo extra en el pie de la foto es de nuestra nieta de 5 años, Diagna, que tiene el dedo limpio,” dijo Wright. A los votantes en México se les debe poner tinta en el pulgar, llamado “dedos”, para evitar la votación duplicada. AMLO ganó más de 30 millones de “dedos” – más del doble de lo que recibió su rival más cercano.

## Local 6 holds 71st Annual Convention



Members of Local 6 gathered for their 71st Annual Convention on May 19th.

ILWU Local 6 held their 71st Annual Constitutional Convention on May 19th at the Local 6 hall in Oakland. In his Officer’s Report, Local 6 Secretary-Treasurer Chris Castaing spoke about recent contract

ratifications at Stratas Food, Cemex Richmond, PDM Steel, Heath Ceramics, Calcott, Alameda Hospital, International Paper and Gallo.

He also spoke about some recent organizing efforts including the suc-

cessful campaign to organize Pharmacy Techs at Alameda Hospital, multiple ongoing efforts to organize in the growing cannabis industry and the successful organizing drive of veterinary techs and customer service representatives at San Francisco VCA pet hospital.

Castaing also said that Local 6 continues working with community groups to secure warehouse positions on the West Oakland Army Base development.

Castaing pointed to extensive renovations being made at the Local 6 hall. He also reported that a tenant in the union’s San Jose property who had been behind with rent is now current. He said they are in the process of selling the San Jose property and will invest proceeds from the sale to benefit the union membership.

## El Local 6 celebra su 71a. Convención Anual

El Local 6 de ILWU celebró su 71ª Convención Anual el 19 de mayo en el salón del Local 6 en Oakland. En su informe, el Secretario Tesorero del Local 6, Chris Castaing, habló de las recientes ratificaciones de contratos en Stratas Food, Cemex Richmond, PDM Steel, Heath Ceramics, Calcott, Alameda Hospital, Internacional Paper y Gallo.

También habló de algunos esfuerzos recientes de sindicalización, entre ellos la exitosa campaña para organizar a los técnicos de farmacia en Alameda Hospital, múltiples esfuerzos en curso para organizar trabajadores en el creciente sector del cannabis y el éxito en la

organización de técnicos veterinarios y representantes de servicios al cliente en San Francisco en el hospital de mascotas VCA.

Castaing también dijo que el Local 6 sigue trabajando con grupos comunitarios para asegurar puestos para almacenistas en el proyecto de desarrollo de la Base del Ejército de West Oakland.

Castaing señaló que se estaban realizando amplias renovaciones en el salón del Local 6. También informó que uno de los inquilinos en la propiedad del sindicato en San José que se había atrasado en el pago del alquiler está ahora al corriente. Dijo que ahora se está tramitando la venta de la propiedad de San José y que las ganancias de la venta serán invertidas para beneficiar a los miembros del sindicato.



Pedro de Sa (a la izquierda), miembro de la Junta Ejecutiva del Local 6 con Chris Castaing, Secretario Tesorero, en el 71a. Convención Anual.

## NEW PENSIONERS:

**Local 8:** George M. Espinoza;  
**Local 10:** Larry S. George; Man Tung Wong;  
**Local 13:** Karl H. Ayres; Raymond A. Morales; William B. Lowry; Catherine A. Cantu; Kenneth F. Stanton; Antonio J. Moreno; Mae E. Mc Daniel; Steven M. Kaupiko; Ronald L. Scroggins;  
**Local 19:** Michael A. Hurlock; Dennis I. Haugen; Stephen L. Winecoff;  
**Local 23:** David C. Ginnis; Richard L. Snell; James C. Guntle; Gary E. Park; Joseph M. Glaser; Jeffrey D. Taylor; William P. Hooper; Randall J. Butchart;  
**Local 46:** Steven G. Ortiz; Virginia E. Avila;  
**Local 63:** Caljean Fulcher; Tim G. Fontes; Reynaldo G. Longboy; Dan M. Mackenzie; Mark E. Shaner; Sharon K. Morgan; Rocky R. Garibay; Margaret E. Sheffield; Susan Y. Schulz;  
**Local 92:** Garry D. Matson;  
**Local 94:** James E. Codd; John T. Hanamaikai; Mark A. Daser; George Escobar Jr.;  
**Local 98:** Philip M. Lelli Jr.;

## DECEASED PENSIONERS:

**Local 4:** Raul Almaraz; **Local 10:** Samuel Cassale; Richard E. Couch;  
**Local 13:** John L. Cameron; Edward A. Schulz; John M. Missetich (Anglynn);  
**Local 23:** Ronald L. Brown; David A. Kancianich (Jolynne); Duane W. Napoleon; Larry T. Cresap (Colleen);  
**Local 26:** Allen J. Franzen; **Local 34:** Edward P. Burns; Darryl B. Allen; Daniel R. Johnstone; Parminder S. Ghuman;  
**Local 52:** Charles W. Stewart;  
**Local 63:** Aubrey W. De Vaughns Jr.; Claude K. Harrison (Arlene);  
**Local 92:** Delbert L. Brown;

## DECEASED SURVIVORS:

**Local 8:** Dorothy A. Swanson; Virginia A. Milo; Julia R. Veberes;  
**Local 12:** Mary A. Mc Kinley;  
**Local 13:** Barbara A. Oates;  
**Local 21:** Dolores V. Parvi; Jacqueline S. Monahan;  
**Local 24:** Dolores J. Carpenter; Janice M. Bogar;  
**Local 34:** Helen N. Lazorisak;  
**Local 40:** Lenora Weddle;  
**Local 63:** Eileen M. Winter;  
**Local 91:** Ann E. Hofer;  
**Local 94:** Jeanne Tesulov;

## ILWU members help tenants fight evictions and build power in Tacoma

*continued from page 3*

to overturn those restrictions through a statewide ballot measure that would allow local rent control ordinances.

### Building a community coalition

While thinking about bigger strategies is important, we try to stay grounded by showing up to help tenants pack up and move when they're forced out. The project keeps us in touch with Tacoma's working class, and it helps unite our diverse membership at Local 23 (A, B and Casual members), along with volunteers from Local 22, members of IATSE 15, IBEW 46, AFSCME Council 28 representing Washington State Employees, Indivisible Tacoma, South Sound Democratic Socialists of America, Associated Ministries, students from the University of Puget Sound, and many other organizations that are helping with this work.

### Organizing is organizing

Whether we're facing a landlord or a boss, organizing is the only practical way for people to solve problems that are too big for individual solutions. Labor unions have organized to win safer working conditions, health care benefits, living wages and dignity in retirement. They also allow us to shore up jurisdiction and maintain supply chain power. Most of us who have experienced the power of collective action on the job – including the withholding of our labor – know how powerful collective action can be.

Likewise, when we fight for housing justice, we can't just complain or ask government to throw money at the problem and expect things to change. Tenants have to organize in order to win affordable housing, pass rent control, enact "just cause" eviction laws, and end housing discrimination. Until

we organize, big landlords and developers will continue winning with their money and power. Organizing can also help us take a deeper look into the root causes of housing injustice – including our economic system that forces so many to live on the margins while a handful at the top enjoy enormous wealth. The system isn't fair and balanced: 54% of Tacomans are paying rent. We estimate that roughly 114,000 Tacoma residents would benefit from better housing laws and tenant protections that the Tiki Tenant Organizing Committee is fighting for.

### Good strategy for unions

This housing issue can put unions front and center in these community struggles and help build power for workers beyond the jobsite. There are almost 50,000 union members connected through the Pierce County Central Labor Council. If we can mobilize that power, we'd have the mass base for a powerful movement – which is precisely where our unions need to be in times like these. Politicians seem to be feeling the public concern about affordable housing, as is the news media. This could be one of those rare occasions when elected officials, the media, community and civic leaders are all willing to support our struggle against displacement and mass evictions that destabilize our school districts, our neighborhoods, our local governments and our workplaces. We hope more unions will join this fight to help working class tenants organize for power and make positive change in our communities.

*Brian Skiffington is a member of Local 23 and active in their Young Workers Committee.*

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 Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275  
 (310) 547-9966

**ADRP—Oregon**  
 Brian Harvey  
 5201 SW Westgate Dr. #207  
 Portland, OR 97221  
 (503) 231-4882

**ADRP—Northern California**  
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 400 North Point  
 San Francisco, CA 94133  
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**ADRP—Washington**  
 Donnie Schwendeman  
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