The International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union (ILWU), the Japan Dock Union Federation (Zenkoku Kowan), and the Waterside Workers’ Federation of Australia (WWFA) welcome you—delegates and guests from the nations of the Pacific Rim—to this historic gathering.

This conference comes at a critical time in history: economic and political systems, and relationships, are undergoing drastic reorganization throughout the globe. Nowhere is this more evident than in our particular economic region, the Pacific Rim—this historic gathering.

Our employers understand the need to coalesce in the protection of their interests—and they have: through trade agreements, and economic and political alliances. And it is these very alliances that necessitate, indeed mandate, our own. Everywhere in our region, and, in fact, much of the world, dock workers are being threatened by the advancement of technology and the government/industry conspiracy to privatize port operations. These threats to our very existence, and, consequently, that of our families, are the driving force behind this conference.

Beginning today, we meet as workers of a single industry, instead of different—and diverse—nations. We meet in recognition of our strategic importance to that industry, the region and the world. And, finally, we meet with a single purpose in mind: to establish mutual understanding and support.

The joint sponsors extend their warmest and most sincere wishes for a productive and enlightening conference, for what we accomplish here could determine the fate of dockworkers everywhere for years to come. The future is in our hands. Let’s join those hands in a lasting bond of brotherhood and solidarity.

David Arian
President
ILWU

Toshio Kamezaki
President
Zenkoku Kowan

John Coombs
President
WWFA
Unity and diversity at Pacific Rim Dockers Conference

By RICHARD BERMACK

SAN FRANCISCO—The Pacific Rim Dockers Conference, held here April 22-24, was to working people what the United Nations is to world governments. A booth of interpreters in the back of the room provided simultaneous translation in English, Japanese and Spanish, with additional translation for Portuguese and French speakers.

As Jorge Melindez, the delegate from Mexico, commented, "It is not often that working people from different countries have the luxury to meet and discuss our problems—usually it is only the bosses that have the privilege."

The conference was a follow up to the dock union meeting held in Yokohama, Japan, in October, and was sponsored by the Waterside Workers Federation of Australia (WWF), the National Council of Dockworkers Unions of Japan (Zenkoku Kowan) and the ILWU. Delegates attending the conference represented dock unions from Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Fiji, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Panama, Singapore, Tahiti, and the United States. Delegates from Vietnam were denied entrance by the United States government.

A LEAP FORWARD

The conference opened with a statement from Zenkoku Kowan President Toshio Kamezaki. Describing the Pacific Rim as one economic region, he called for building unity among Pacific Rim dockers. "We are all facing common economic conditions and government attacks," he said in his opening remarks.

"We need policies that benefit all humanity. We need to go into the third millennium without the horrors of the last two, without economies based on military expansion," said ILWU International President David Arian in his opening remarks.

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WWF General Secretary John Coombs provided a historical perspective. In the 1960s, he said, there were a maximum of 25,000 dockworkers in Australia; since the advent of containerization in 1967, the ranks have plummeted to 2,000.

To meet this challenge the stevedores' union merged with unions representing fishermen, engineers, clerks and seafarers to form the Waterside Workers Federation. The WWF furthered alliances with the Maritime Federation. The unions, Coombs said, realized "that if we don't unite one by one we will fall one by one."

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OF DOCKWORKERS

FROM PANAMA
Roberto McLean, Jose Betegon, Luis Amaya
Federation Industrial de Trabajadores del Transportes Terrestre, Aereos, Maritimos Portuarios y Similares
1,1064 members, ranging from dock workers to office workers, at the port of Cristobal, near Colon.

“There is no job security, and we have many problems with unsafe working conditions. Recently a stevedore was on the top of a stack of containers five high. While using a wrench to de-lash a bridge feeding latch, he fell straight down and died.

“The United States government is in league with the steamship companies to weaken the unions. The US has broken several promises in the past. But dockworkers are united. We’re not going to let anyone push us around.”

FROM CANADA
Gordie Westrand
ILWU Canadian Area
9,000 members: 3,000 in long-shore; others in retail and wholesale.

FROM SINGAPORE
Lee Mun Hou, Zaini Bin Haron
Port Workers Union
Representing 5,000 dock-side workers, including crane operators, truck drivers, prime movers, computer operators, boatmen, container movers and stevedores.

“We will be there, no strings attached and no questions asked.”

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“We will be there, no strings attached and no questions asked.”

Harry Bridges

ILWU: A Long History of International Solidarity
By Eugene Vrana
ILWU Archivist & Librarian

The ILWU initiated the call for this conference in keeping with our longstanding principles of labor unity and international worker solidarity. We continue to believe, as Harry Bridges put it 32 years ago this month, “We are a union of workers. We approach things from a working-class point of view. We think now, more than ever before, that the old slogan 'Workers of the world unite' was never more meaningful than it is today.”

In the 1930s, we blocked shipment of supplies to the rising fascist movements in Europe and Asia. During the past 30 years we have also refused to handle cargo bound for apartheid in South Africa, and the military dictatorships of Chile and El Salvador. We have been guided in these actions by the conviction that, as Brother Bridges wrote many years ago, “Contacts, understanding, brotherhood, and solidarity with all peoples of all lands are the major worry. Still, 90 percent of our work force is organized.”

BUILDING UNITY
To help build this understanding, the ILWU has sponsored overseas delegations of rank and file members—and has, in turn, hosted trade union visitors from every continent. We have also routinely shared information about collective bargaining and working conditions with foreign unions and labor federations.

On an organizational level, ILWU has devoted considerable time and energy to building unity among transport unions: in the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), the Maritime Federation of the World, Committee for Maritime Unity, the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), the International Labor Organization (ILO), and now, the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF).

PACIFIC FOCUS
Under the leadership of Bridges and Louis Goldblatt, the ILWU early on recognized that our welfare was closely tied to the labor movements of Asia, Australia and the Pacific region. Trade union solidarity throughout this area was important to us in North America, and to our members in Hawaii. After years of effort, the ILWU in 1959 helped initiate the first All Pacific and Asian Dockworkers Conference (with Australia, New Zealand, Japan and the Soviet Union). In 1980 we affiliated with the Pacific Dockworkers Consultation and Correspondence Committee—the same year our Hawaii division, Local 142, sponsored the first in a series of international conferences on the dangers of nuclear power and radioactive materials for the peoples of the Pacific, particularly transport workers. In a similar vein, we have shared scientific information with the Japanese longshore unions on hazardous pesticides present in cargo-handling.

Today, we are deeply involved in the fight to protect and expand labor rights, particularly in countries threatened by the globalization of the world economy and privatization of the transportation industries in many countries. We do this because, as Bridges said, in 1961, “We are a labor movement, we are a part of the working class of America and the world...if and when the chips get down for a struggle against their employers or all employers for good trade union programs, we will be there, no strings attached and no questions asked.”
Pacific Rim Dockers Conference Participants

DELEGATES:
A through G: Luis Amaya, Dave Ariano, Eduardo Rios Arias, Rich Austin, Luiz Braga, Issac Zavala Caceres, Albert Cofre, Roberto de Jesus Contreras, John Coombs, M. Charles David, Elenas Espinal, Marcelz Goggi, Zeke Ruelas whose tireless efforts—not only for this does—is an inspiration to all of us.

B through N: Zaini Bin Haron, Leon Harris, Julio Hassan, Lee Mun Hou, Taoish Kamezaki, Jim Keith, Eusebio Lapenia, Frank Lonardo, Bruce Malcom, Masayuki Masui, Roberto McLean, Brian McWilliams, Jorge Melendez, Kenji Mizukami, Denis Igadillo Montoya, Yoshinoli Nambara;

P through W: Fred Paulino, David Ponzanart, Rogelio Ramos, Eduardo Antonic Roch, Jim Pinosa, George Taholo, Maria Teixeira, Hideyuki Tosawa, Gorthy W estr and.

FRATERNAL DELEGATES: Joe Cortez, Whitey Disley, Burrill Hatch, Joe Barra, Gunnar Lundeberg, Don Marcus, George McCartney, Ken Leo, Rytmar Morisaki, John Santosone, Thomas Shay, Norman Tuck, Dick Wise.

SPECIAL GUESTS: Nikki Bridges and Carl Yoneda.

THANKS
The Pacific Rim Dockers Conference would not have been possible without the assistance of several ILWU volunteers.

On behalf of everyone at the conference we extend our deepest appreciation to Marge Belthouse, Jerry Butler, Tino Castro, Eddie Gutierrez, Jack Heyman, Salvador Lechuga, Chris Lomeli, Art Lujan, Bobby Olvera, Jr., Ray Ortiz, Linda Palacios, Richard Portis, Leo Robinson, Jacque Ruelas, Rita Ruelas, and Pat Tobin.

We especially wish to thank Zeke Ruelas whose tireless efforts—not only for this conference but in everything he does—is an inspiration to all of us.

Sean Ariano
Ray Familathe
ILWU International Department.

Stuck in Thailand
Officials of the Vietnam Maritime Workers Union eagerly accepted their invitation to the conference. Two delegates were selected to attend.

Since visas for the US are impossible to get in Vietnam (the result of the longstanding US embargo), the delegates, at great cost, flew to Thailand five days before the conference to apply for visas from the American Embassy there. Embassy personnel told them it would take 15 days to process the request—and there was still no guarantee.

The Embassy stood firm, insisting on clearance from the State Department. Meanwhile, member of Congress Nancy Pelosi issued a communique to the US Embassy in Thailand, urging swift consideration and stressing the importance of the conference and the delegation’s participation.

The Embassy stood firm, insisting on clearance from the State Department. But word never came. The delegates returned home empty-handed.

\[\text{Possibly they would have had this problem if they were visiting AT&T?}\]

THE SAN FRANCISCO COMMUNIQUE
April 24, 1993

The Pacific Rim Dockers Conference was called as a result of the Yokohama (ILA), the International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Association Waterside Workers Federation of Australia (WWF), and the National Council of the Vietnam Maritime Workers Union’s of Japan (Zenkokai Kowan), at the ITF sponsored dockers seminar.

The San Francisco Pacific Rim Dockers Conference views the Pacific Rim as a definable economic and geographical region. Shipping interests in this region are combining in an effort to further maximize profits. Coordination between various capitalist countries and shipping companies is having a serious effect on employment and working conditions around the globe. The governments and waterfront employers in various countries have physically removing the union from the waterfront.

Unity among working people and their unions must be based on specific areas where there is common ground. We are committed to the following coordinated activities:

1. Developing communication networks to exchange information on safety standards, including reports on deaths and injuries.
2. Coordination of corporate research of shipping/stevedoring companies, with the sharing of this information enhancing our ability to respond effectively to these employers when necessary.
3. We are committed to support all efforts to defeat privatization where it leads to the displacement of dockworkers throughout the Pacific Rim. Where requested by unions currently fighting privatization, the conference has endorsed letters of protest to relevant governments and employers.
4. The unions participating in this conference are committed to developing closer ties through continuing the process of multi-union travel delegations.
5. In defense of human rights, we will develop a social charter ensuring the economic and political interests of dockers throughout the Pacific Rim are protected.
6. Every effort will be made to broaden the applications of this communiqué to all of the dockers unions of the Pacific Rim. This will be done by constant communication and by future conferences, as they are deemed necessary.
7. We note that many of our union brother and sister delegates attending this conference live under repressive regimes and are exposed to inherent personal danger. Therefore we will monitor their well being, and are prepared to support them in the strongest possible way, politically, and where necessary, financially, to protect their personal well being.

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