29th ILWU Convention, Los Angeles

Delegates to vote on program, nominate top union officers

PREAMBLE

Since the beginning of history mankind has struggled individually and collectively for political, economic and cultural betterment, and has the greatest ability to make such advancement through democratic organization to achieve common aims.

Therefore, we who have the common objectives to advance the living standards of ourselves and our fellow workers everywhere in the world, to promote the general welfare of our nation and our communities, to banish racial and religious prejudice and discrimination, to strengthen democracy everywhere and achieve permanent peace in the world, do form ourselves into one, indivisible union and adopt the following constitution to guide our conduct and protect our democracy within the union.

BLEAK YEARS FOR LABOR

Aside from the internal adjustments that normally take place when there are significant changes in the leadership of a union, the new officers were sworn in during some of the bleakest years for organized labor since the ILWU itself was founded.

The result is that unions nationally represent a smaller share of the workforce today than at any time since the founding of the ILWU: 16 percent of all workers, and only 11 percent of the private workforce. In 1991-92, all but two U.S. unions declined in membership.

TAKING ITS TOLL

In 1992, Rev. Jesse Jackson joined labor and church leaders at a rally for 1,700 workers, including Local 6 members, striking Oakland’s Summit Hospital.
ILWU holds memorial offers 4-point plan

Two Japanese students slain in San Pedro

SAN PEDRO, Calif.—ILWU locals in Southern California organized a memorial dedication for two Japanese college students, Takuma Ito and Go Matsura, who were gunned down in San Pedro March 25. The locals and the International also called on the port, shipping companies and the harbor community to adopt a four-point plan to prevent further violence in the future.

The following press release was issued by Locals 13, 63 and 94, and the International: "This killing has sent shock waves throughout the entire San Pedro Harbor Area community as well across the country and throughout Japan. The image of America today seen in Japan and throughout our own community, is one of violence and negativity.

"The loss of these two lives cannot go without response. If we do not learn and correct that which is wrong in society then it will only get worse. "In honor of these two young, free individuals who came to America to experience the democracy and freedom that all of us believe we already have, the ILWU, in honor of America is a multicultural community. We welcome and honor the contributions of the Hispanic, the Afro-American, the Chinese, the Swede, the Norwegian, the Colombian, the Iranian and all peoples from other countries. This is what America is all about.

"The strength of America has been its diversity, and even this diversity has created problems, it is this cosmopolitanism that will eventually unify the world against war, hatred and starvation."

Just as The Dispatcher went to press, we received this report from the Canadian Area:

VANCOUVER, B.C.—On Tuesday, March 22, 1994, the ILWU and the British Columbia Maritime Employers Association (BCMEA) met with arbitrator Alan Hope to put forward arguments on their final offer (as per Bill C-10 to the Conservative government) for a fair settlement. We did not—

"In benefits, the committee proposed an additional $3.50 per hour in 1993, $3.50 per hour in 1994, and $2.00 per hour in 1995. In another meeting we proposed an additional $5.50 per hour in 1994. The union committee continued to argue that if it did not include the changes to the shift schedule, dispatch times and the half-hour lunch break in its proposal, then it would be unlikely that arbitrator Hope would decide in the union's favor.

"The Canadian Area ILWU has negotiated for the last three years and has acted in a responsible manner. We dealt with many issues and have not reacted to the frustration of having the employer drag on negotiations. When the Canadian Area was faced with a "lockout" Jan. 29, 1994, it was because of the employers that we could not achieve a settlement by negotiating "fairly" at the bar.

"In that time Hope would decide in the union's favor. The Canadian Area ILWU has negotiated for the last three years and has acted in a responsible manner.

"We dealt with many issues and have not reacted to the frustration of having the employer drag on negotiations. When the Canadian Area was faced with a "lockout" Jan. 29, 1994, it was because of the employers that we could not achieve a settlement by negotiating "fairly" at the bargaining table. It was apparent at that time that the employer was up to his old game of running off to the legislature in government.

"The government legislation gave the employer what he wanted. Final offer selection was the form of arbitration he had been trying to get the union to agree to. The union went into arbitration well-prepared, and the committee felt that its presentation eliminated all the employers' arguments. The union argued that this was a positive agreement of change and to get that change the employer had to pay more than what the mediator had recommended.

"The Canadian Area committee submitted its final offer on Jan. 29, and it was hoped that we would get a good settlement. When the arbitrator ignored the strength of the union's position and chose the employers' proposal, it is clear that the process was flawed under the Conservative government and it appears to be no different under the Liberal government.

"We had assumed that the arbitrator would make his decision based on the logic of the presentations. We are disappointed with the conclusion reached by Mr. Hope.

In Solidarity,
Negotiating Committee,
Canadian Area ILWU

LINDSAY MCLAUGHLIN
ILWU Washington Representative

ILWU rank and file perseverance in fighting the State Department's "reciprocity" policy is beginning to pay off for America's longshore workers. On March 24, 1994, the State Department issued an advance notice of a proposed rule change that would make it more difficult for crewmen aboard foreign vessels to perform longshore work in US ports.

"The State Department's policy for years has threatened U.S. longshore jurisdiction by favoring foreign shippers' interests over our own. This new proposal means that the Department will only implement the reciprocity exception if requested by the relevant foreign port or shipping company. This represents a significant improvement over the most recent "reciprocity exception." Unfortunately the amendment was tabled at full committee level. However, the chairman requested that the Government Accounting Office (GAO) conduct a study on the methodology the State Department used to implement the "reciprocity exception." As expected, the GAO's report is critical of the Department's flawed approach.

"As I stated earlier, the ILWU pressure has finally led the State Department to review their interpretation of the "reciprocity exception." Now is the time to keep the heat on Congress and the administration to uphold the principles of the Clinton platform in "Putting People First." We are asking ILWU members to petition their members of Congress to take a position in support of proposed changes to the Department of Labor's "reciprocity exception." As always, we would appreciate copies of any letters sent to the ILWU Washington Office, 1188 Franklin Street, San Francisco, CA 94109-9972. Second class postage paid at San Francisco. Subscriptions, $2.50 per year.

BRIAN McWILLIAMS
THOMAS TRASK
President
Vice President

Communications Director, Editor: Zack Nauth
Editorial Assistant: Sue Chen

Published monthly at 1188 Franklin Street, San Francisco, California 94109-9972.
Second class postage paid at San Francisco. Subscriptions, $2.50 per year.
Mexican gov’t attacks longshore unions!

ILWU investigates threat of privatization in Mexican ports; shipping companies would whipsaw U.S., Canadian, Mexican longshoremen

Stories & photos by David Bacon

Mexican longshoremen on the Pacific Coast face wrenching changes in their work lives in the near future—changes that will likely cut wages and conditions substantially, and which may cost them their jobs and their unions.

This was the conclusion reached by an ILWU delegation that visited three of those Mexican ports in March.

The delegation also saw that these changes will eventually affect the U.S. West Coast ports as shipping companies use NAFTA to invest in Mexican ports. Big shipping companies and governments in both countries hope that modern port facilities in Mexico will compete for work with U.S. ports, whipsawing longshoremen against each other to force down labor costs. Growing unity between U.S., Canadian and Mexican longshore unions could create a big obstacle to this plan.

From March 13-20, the ILWU delegation visited the ports of Salina Cruz, Lazaro Cardenas and Manzanillo (see map on page 2). ILWU longshoremen went to the docks in each port and spoke with rank-and-file longshoremen on the job, visited union offices and hiring halls, and had long discussions with the officers of each port’s union.

“We're now in a position to develop a much closer relationship,” concluded delegation leader Norm Parks, longshore Local 8, Portland.

Lewis Wright, marine clerk’s Local 63 in Southern California, and president of the ILWU's Americas Liaison Committee, felt that the delegation “added substantially to our knowledge of the situation in Mexico, which will affect us directly.”

WE WORK ON THE SAME BOATS—WE'RE BROTHERS

While the ILWU delegation was empowered only to make contact and begin discussions, it was clear that Mexican dockworkers wanted to develop those relationships further.

Guillermo Garcia Jimenez, interior secretary for the longshore union in Salina Cruz, reminded his members that “we all do the same work on the same boats. We're brothers.”

The delegation told Mexican longshoremen that it would make their situation known to members in the U.S. and Canada, and look for ways in which longshoremen in all three countries can support each other.

Organized jointly by the Americas Liaison Committee and the ILWU International Department, the delegation consisted of Parks, a member of the International Executive Board; Wright; Roberto Osorio, Local 63 member and committee vice-president; Jack Heyman, Local 10, San Francisco; Leal Sundet, Local 53, Newport, Ore.; and Doug Getchell, Local 12, Coos Bay, Ore. They were accompanied by Ray Familathe, head of the ILWU International Department. The delegation was approved by the February Longshore Caucus and financed by the division.

SALE WOULD DISSOLVE GOVERNMENT PORTS

Last August, the Mexican Congress approved legislation transferring all ports along the Pacific Coast to the Ministry of Finance prior to their sale to private companies, a sale expected to generate $200 million. That sale would dissolve Servicios Portuarios (Port Services), the government enterprise that runs dock facilities and employs all longshoremen in those ports. Once Servicios Portuarios is gone, the government would sign contracts with private companies, including U.S.-based shipping companies, to run different port operations. Workers on the docks in each port will then become employees of those private companies.

Jaime Cortedor Esnaola, a Mexican Transport Ministry official, claims that privatizing the ports would lower wages and put an end to union influence, since “ports are going to be open to new companies and competition.” The rebellion in Chiapas, however, has caused the government to move more slowly in provoking confrontations that might lead to other
Ports of Mexico

U.S. carriers getting in line for taking

ILWU members compare notes with Mexican dockers at three Pacific Coast ports

The ILWU delegation found that conditions varied substantially in the three ports it visited. Its first stop was Salina Cruz, a southern port near Chiapas, the state where indigenous farmers recently staged an armed rebellion. Some modernization of the port has taken place with the installation of a hammerhead crane and three trans-tainers. As in all the ports visited, the names on the containers were familiar: NYK, APL, Linea Mexicana, Itel and others. The 70 active members of the Salina Cruz longshore union told ILWU members that their chief problem was the lack of work, which they said had been transferred to other Pacific Coast ports after the union refused to replace its older members with younger ones. Only 3-4 container ships a month dock in Salina Cruz, with about 300 containers loaded and unloaded per ship. As a result, the earnings of Salina Cruz longshoremen were about $100-150 pesos per week (about $83-50). Guillermo Garcia Jimenez, interior secretary for the union, explained that their current wages would buy food for a family of four, but leave no money left over for anything else.

TRAINED WITH LOCAL 13

In Salina Cruz the delegates ran into our land to build the port, we would all have good, permanent jobs as longshoremen.

Now Lazaro Cardenas, situated north of Salina Cruz in the state of Michoacan, is an industrial city with tens of thousands of inhabitants. The local economy is based on an iron mine and one of Latin America's largest steel mills, Sidor. Extensive port facilities, including three hammerheads, four trans-tainers and a bulk loader, serve the mill and provide connections for shipments in and out of central Mexico. The ILWU delegation observed the evening dispatch, which took place in the street not far from the port. As in all the ports visited, the union refuses to replace its older members with younger ones. That makes it hard for workers to get good, permanent jobs as longshoremen, Ricardo Aguilar Carbajal, who worked with ILWU members in L.A., holds a plaque given by Local 13 in Wilmington, Ca., to the Salina Cruz stevedores' union in 1968, in honor of its the anniversary. The banner celebrates the union's founding in 1911.

our land to build the port, we would all have good, permanent jobs as longshoremen.

In Salina Cruz the delegates ran into a piece of ILWU history. They met Ricardo Aguilar Carbajal, who worked with ILWU members in L.A., holds a plaque given by Local 13 in Wilmington, Ca., to the Salina Cruz stevedores' union in 1968, in honor of its the anniversary. The banner celebrates the union's founding in 1911.

our land to build the port, we would all have good, permanent jobs as longshoremen.

Now Lazaro Cardenas, situated north of Salina Cruz in the state of Michoacan, is an industrial city with tens of thousands of inhabitants. The local economy is based on an iron mine and one of Latin America's largest steel mills, Sidor. Extensive port facilities, including three hammerheads, four trans-tainers and a bulk loader, serve the mill and provide connections for shipments in and out of central Mexico. The ILWU delegation observed the evening dispatch, which took place in the street not far from the port. As in all the ports visited, the union refuses to replace its older members with younger ones. That makes it hard for workers to get good, permanent jobs as longshoremen, Ricardo Aguilar Carbajal, who worked with ILWU members in L.A., holds a plaque given by Local 13 in Wilmington, Ca., to the Salina Cruz stevedores' union in 1968, in honor of its the anniversary. The banner celebrates the union's founding in 1911.
The price of privatization: workers fired each month

LAZARO CARDENAS, Mexico—Privatization is the most important element in the new Mexican economic policy, the same policy that led to the passage of NAFTA. It’s also the most vivid example for workers of the betrayal of the Mexican revolution and the social contract between workers and the government that followed. Unlike the U.S., most industrial workers in Mexico work for government-owned enterprises. But the government, through privatization, has already sold off many of its state-run industries, such as airlines. Now the ports are on the auction block.

In the city of Lazaro Cardenas, the ILWU delegation saw firsthand the devastating future for workers that lies behind the neutral sounding term, "privatization."

WAGES CUT IN HALF

Four years ago, the Mexican government sold Siderca, the biggest steel mill in Lazaro Cardenas, to a private partnership between Mexican and Indian investors. The contract of the Miners Union, which represents workers at the mill, was torn up and a greatly inferior agreement forced on them. Wages were cut in half. 1,500 of the 5,000 workers were laid off. Then the mill began to rehire the laid-off workers, but as temporary, contract laborers. Now, all those workers are terminated every 28 days and rehired two days later so they don’t acquire legal benefits under Mexican law.

"We weren’t prepared at Siderca," recalled Alfredo Navarrete, general secretary of the longshore union in Lazaro Cardenas. "We raised money and tried to help people who lost their jobs, but we couldn’t stop what happened."

The longshore union itself has already been the victim of privatization. Part of the Lazaro Cardenas dock area, belonging to the huge Fertimex fertilizer plant, was fenced off in 1987. The company, which had been sold to private investors, brought in its own workforce to load and unload ships. Longshore union members went around in boats, boarded the ships, and called off the workers doing the longshore work. Then the government brought in troops to simply expel the union, and Fertimex dock operations have been nonunion ever since.

STRIKE WON REPRESENTATION

The union was successful, however, in protecting jobs loading grain. A waterfront silo was built in the port, but was damaged in the 1986 earthquake before it opened. Last year the government sold the silo to a Spanish company, which repaired it. The longshore union waited for Servicios Portuarios to tell the Spanish company that it had to use union members, but nothing happened. Finally, longshoremen struck the grain silo, and after 48 hours won agreement that the work belonged to union members. Strikebreaking is illegal during a legal strike in Mexico.

Privatization has taken its toll on the whole community, according to Hector Camacho Solis, the longshore union’s interior secretary. "It’s meant a big increase in unemployment here in Lazaro Cardenas," he said. "Now we have problems with people who rob and commit crimes because they have no work. It’s causing a political crisis as well—people have no faith that the PRI will protect their interests, and some now support the opposition parties."
MEXICO CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

outbreaks of disorder.

Alfredo Navarette, general secretary of the longshore union in Lazaro Cardenas, told the ILWU delegation that privatization "will create instability for longshoremen, changing how we're paid and our way of working. Through years of negotiating contracts with Servicios Portuarios, we've been able to gain important benefits. Our major concern is that we'll lose what we've gained, and once we've lost things we know it will be very difficult to get them back."

PARTY BREAKS WITH UNIONS

In past years under the old alliance between trade unions and the ruling Party of the Institutionalized Revolution (PRI), the union was able to win relatively high wages and benefits from the government. Now those connections are being severed. The government's move represents a break in a traditional alliance between the PRI and dockworkers' unions, who have held the same position in relation to the country's working class that longshoremen hold in the United States. Now, however, the Mexican dockworkers unions are seen as an impediment to the free-trade policies of the Harvard-trained economists. They were nationalized. Land reform led to the creation of ejidos—communal ejidos, where farmers held land in common. On paper, workers enjoyed extensive labor rights, including housing and health care, while practices like strikebreaking were prohibited by law.

The purpose of the economy was to provide an economic life that would benefit all Mexicans, including workers and farmers. To this day, most Mexican industrial workers still work in government-owned enterprises.

Under the impact of its rising foreign debt, however, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and U.S. and European banks began to pressure Mexico to make economic changes. These changes were supported by PRI technocrats. The purpose of these economic reforms was to create attractive conditions for the investment of foreign capital. They included selling national enterprises to private investors, removing restrictions on foreign ownership, disbanding the ejido system, ending the subsidies on tortillas and other food and services for the poor, and restricting the rights of unions.

Negotiating NAFTA was part of the economic reform package. But as the Mexican economy becomes more dependent on U.S. investment, the price the Mexican people must pay for these gains is severe. Private corporations demand new restrictions on the rights of unions and workers. They demand the right to hire who they choose, often with no unions, and to introduce competition among workers to force down wages. Far from creating more prosperity and removing the incentive for immigration, these policies create wealth for the people at the top, but misery for those at the bottom. The pressure to emigrate to the U.S. increases, since making a decent living becomes more and more difficult.

But from the perspective of Mexico's technocratic leadership, they are willing to sacrifice the social fabric to attract investments from outside to curry favor in the trickle-down theory of economic expansion. The U.S. supports this effort because it provides a low-cost manufacturing base for consumers and creates wealth that can be transferred back to the U.S. in the form of debt payments and profits. People like Cecilio Lepe Bautista, a past mayor of Manzanillo, head of the city's longshore union and a formal of the PRI, share the faith. These new policies signal that the PRI and the government have abandoned the principles on which they were founded—giving protection and political power to Mexico's workers and farmers.

UNIONS OFFERED SEVERANCE

The union will have to survive on two big fights in order to maintain even a semblance of the powerful position and benefits it has achieved. When Servicio Portuario goes out of business, all the longshoremen's unions will be "liquidated"—that is, their employment will be terminated. Although the Mexican constitution mandates that terminated workers must be paid severance, there is always a big struggle to ensure that the law is enforced, and that payments are adequate.

According to the Journal of Commerce, the Mexican government has set aside $30 million for these severance payments. But spread among many ports and workers, $30 million won't go far. And if longshoremen have no jobs, since the money is spent on the needs of daily living, they will share a situation of desperate unemployment with millions of other unemployed Mexican workers.

But the real fight comes after the discussion of severance. Who will get the work for the new private contractors, and under what conditions? Mexican labor law says that the union's "registro," its legal jurisdiction, guarantees that any longshoremen working in a port should belong to the union. But under some circumstances, the registro can be withdrawn. A new company may hire its own workers. Some government officials have said that the union can reorganize itself as a private business, and compete with other private companies for a contract to provide dock operations. The private contractors are very likely to be nonunion. And none of the Mexican officials involved said that the workers are interested in organizing themselves as businesses, or probably even able to.

The Mexican government has told longshore workers that private investment will lead to modernization of the docks, and that more productivity and efficiency will raise income to a level closer to that in the U.S. But ILWU member Leal Sundet reminded the Mexican dockworkers at each meeting that his fellow union members have a high standard of living because they fought to build a strong union, not because they work for private companies.

The government invoked the "requisa," and disbanded the country's most powerful longshore union. The union hall was seized, along with records going back to 1980. Then the government installed three private contractors to manage port operations. Hourly wages fell from about $7 to $1, while productivity rose from 18 to over 40 shipping containers handled per hour. Longshoremen now work without breaks or lunch hours. In place of the dispatch system, unemployed Mexican workers.

Unions like the Mexican dockworkers unions have friends in the U.S. Leo M. Riddick, general secretary-treasurer of the ILWU, told the delegation that his union would do all it could to help the Mexican dockworkers union in its struggle. He said that the union had been established with Mexican funds, and that it had trained a number of Mexican dockworkers at its school in Taos. He said the Mexican dockworkers union must demand the right to hire who they choose, often with no unions, and to introduce competition among workers to force down wages. Far from creating more prosperity and removing the incentive for immigration, these policies create wealth for the people at the top, but misery for those at the bottom. The pressure to emigrate to the U.S. increases, since making a decent living becomes more and more difficult.

But the real fight comes after the discussion of severance. Who will get the work for the new private contractors, and under what conditions? Mexican labor law says that the union's "registro," its legal jurisdiction, guarantees that any longshoremen working in a port should belong to the union. But under some circumstances, the registro can be withdrawn. A new company may hire its own workers. Some government officials have said that the union can reorganize itself as a private business, and compete with other private companies for a contract to provide dock operations. The private contractors are very likely to be nonunion. And none of the Mexican officials involved said that the workers are interested in organizing themselves as businesses, or probably even able to.

The Mexican government has told longshore workers that private investment will lead to modernization of the docks, and that more productivity and efficiency will raise income to a level closer to that in the U.S. But ILWU member Leal Sundet reminded the Mexican dockworkers at each meeting that his fellow union members have a high standard of living because they fought to build a strong union, not because they work for private companies.

The government invoked the "requisa," and disbanded the country's most powerful longshore union. The union hall was seized, along with records going back to 1980. Then the government installed three private contractors to manage port operations. Hourly wages fell from about $7 to $1, while productivity rose from 18 to over 40 shipping containers handled per hour. Longshoremen now work without breaks or lunch hours. In place of the dispatch system, unemployed Mexican workers.

Unions like the Mexican dockworkers unions have friends in the U.S. Leo M. Riddick, general secretary-treasurer of the ILWU, told the delegation that his union would do all it could to help the Mexican dockworkers union in its struggle. He said that the union had been established with Mexican funds, and that it had trained a number of Mexican dockworkers at its school in Taos. He said the Mexican dockworkers union must demand the right to hire who they choose, often with no unions, and to introduce competition among workers to force down wages. Far from creating more prosperity and removing the incentive for immigration, these policies create wealth for the people at the top, but misery for those at the bottom. The pressure to emigrate to the U.S. increases, since making a decent living becomes more and more difficult.
“May on the Bay” boat cruise to benefit NCDC

The fourth annual fund-raising cruise for the Northern California District Council of the ILWU will be held on Saturday, May 14, from 8:00 p.m. until midnight on the Red and White Fleet. Tickets are available at the ILWU locals from 7:30 p.m. for the cruise, which will leave at 8:00 p.m. sharp. The $40 ticket includes food, a raffle for big prizes, as well as the Unions of the Year awards ceremony. For ticket information, contact Flo or Jackie at (415) 621-7326, or Bertha Miller at (510) 632-1830. Tickets are available at all ILWU Locals 6, 10, 14, 17, 18, 34, 54, 75, 91 and the IBU. Checks can be made payable to Local 6, ILWU, 255 Ninth Street, San Francisco, CA 94103. Include your name, address, and phone number. The cruise will be Saturday, May 14, at 7:30 p.m. for the cruise, which will start promptly at 8:30 p.m. Free parking is available near the Marina Fireman’s Hall, 240 2nd Street. For more information please call (415) 774-4413, or by phone at (415) 621-4438. Local 50 to sponsor fifth annual bridges golf tourney

The fifth annual Harry Bridges Memorial Tournament, sponsored by ILWU Local 50, is scheduled for May 21 at the Gearhart Golf Course in Atlin, Oregon. Information on the tournament can be obtained from the ILWU; the four-man scramble format will include prizes, lunch and refreshments. A pre-registration deadline starts promptly at 8:30 a.m. Free parking is available near the Marina Fireman’s Hall, 240 2nd Street. For more information please call Mooy (415) 772-4413, or by phone at (415) 621-4438.

NAFTA trade dinner goes astern in Seattle

SEATTLE — In a spontaneous show of solidarity and passion, an estimated 500 trade unionists descended on the Seattle International Trade Center on March 9. Business executives from Mexico, Canada and the United States attended this first post-NAFTA trade show. The occasion that evening was a $300-a-plate banquet.

The workers rallied about three blocks away across the street from the Seattle Labor Temple. Representing about every labor organization in western Washington, including a strong ILWU delegation from Locals 19, 52, 75, 91 and the IBU, the workers expressed pride in the power of their union's international solidarity. The united front of workers represented by the ILWU, the Teamsters, the Machinists and other unions, the reception promised food refreshments, entertainment as well as cultural displays of art and photography. For more information please call: (415) 876-4986.

LOCAL UNION ELECTIONS

San Francisco - active and retired longshore families in the ports of San Francisco, Oakland, Long Beach and Los Angeles, members of the ILWU who are 18 years of age or older who have voted and paid dues for the current year are eligible to vote on the future of their pension plans. The elections will be held during May, with the results to be announced in June. Details can be obtained from the ILWU locals or the ILWU Benefit Plans office. The change will be effective July 1, 1994, under provisions of their July 1, 1993 collective bargaining agreements.

DENTAL PLANS

San Francisco - Active and retired longshore families in the ports where members have a choice can change medical plans during the open enrollment period May 1 to May 31, 1994. The change will be effective July 1, 1994. In San Francisco, Los Angeles and Portland/Vancouver, active and retired longshore members may change dental plans during the month of May.

ILWU right on international worker support

This letter responds to an article in the Jan. 19, 1994, Dispatcher titled “Vietnam veterans influence ILWU international policy.” The story tells of a proposal by a group of Vietnam vets, who are ILWU members, objecting to overseas delegations to Vietnam until the U.S. embargo is lifted and the POW/MIA issue resolved. In my opinion, this is a sharp rightward break with long-standing ILWU policy.

My sympathies lie with our brothers (and sisters) who were forced to participate in the war wrongfully, and with their families. We cannot blame our history. They were victims of a vicious American foreign policy that sacrificed them in a crusade of corporate greed.

However, the cause that they advocated, the observance of the U.S. embargo and the POW/MIA issue, are issues that are being resolved by the people responsible for the war. Those errors in foreign policy, corrected, will sooner or later bring about a new international order. We should support a Vietnamese worker rather than a U.S. corporate executive with whom we have dealt.

Dick Moor, Seattle, Wash.
ILWU in Hawaii, which was organized by longshore-workers. It has been difficult just making ends meet.

To the right: Linda Palacios (second from right) and Bob Lindsey, Seattle Local 19, attends one of the many longshore caucuses where members vigorously exercised their rights in the democratic process to advance the programs of the division.

CONVENTION CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

left their mark on the ILWU, workers and our communities. Today we are faced with hard choices. The union's membership is declining, and with it, the per capita dues that keep the union running. Each year, it has been difficult just making ends meet.

SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM.

The centerpiece of our program is the proposal to delegates at this Convention to redevote one-third of the ILWU's International budget over the next three years to: (1) fund and implement a comprehensive plan to hire, train and supervise a skilled staff to reach a goal of adding 2,500 new members a year.

The ILWU joined as a sponsor of the AFL-CIO Organizing Institute and sent 110 ILWU members through the institute's weekend training.

The International Executive Board adopted a proposed new structure to build Regional Organizing Committees (ROCs) in each region to share costs with the locals. The Columbia River Area has set the example with a program that has involved more money and are more active at the local, state and national levels than at any time in the past. Rank-and-file delegations from the longshore division, district councils and various locals traveled to Washington and directly lobbied their congresspeople, using direct action tactics when necessary to get their point across on NAFTA, health care, striker replacement, immigration and other important legislation.

We participate in a strong, union-wide effort to defeat NAFTA, which included gathering 10,000 petition signatures. We played a critical role in shaping the terms of the debate by calling for a social charter for labor standards.

THE FIRST PRIORITY OF OUR INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM WAS TO PROVIDE LOCALS WITH A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TO HIRE, TRAIN AND SUPERVISE A SKILLED STAFF TO REACH A GOAL OF ADDING 2,500 NEW MEMBERS A YEAR.

CONCLUSION

The critical question facing each delegate to this International Convention is whether we have the will, the commitment and the ability to resurrect an organization that has for the last decade dropped in numbers, in influence and in its ability to protect the workers we represent. We believe this Convention will prove that we, this generation, are willing and able to fulfill its obligation to the founders of this union and to a future generation of young workers.

The ILWU launched a corporate campaign against food giant Peavey-ConAgra. Members of northwestern ILWU Locals 21 and 40 traveled to the Seoul and the Midwest to inform workers and customers at the company's subsidiaries (like this Peavey elevator in Iowa) of the company's dirty deeds, and embarrassing the CEO at a stockholders meeting.

The ILWU is the largest union in Hawaii today, comprising more than 2,500 members.

The ILWU's International budget over the next three years will not begin to show results for several years.

The ILWU's membership has shrunk to about 14,000 members in the tourism service industry, and sugar and pineapple workers to become the second-largest union in Hawaii today, comprising half of the ILWU's total membership. While strong organizing efforts of the last 10 years have paid off with a base of 14,000 members in the tourism service industry, recessions in the U.S. and Japan have led to hotel closures, cutbacks and stagnant growth.

The warehouse division continues to shrink rapidly as ship owners run away to cheaper workforces and consolidate in an attempt to maintain profit margins. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) of 1993 was the frosting on the cake for the corporate drive to cheapen the cost of labor and ratchet down working conditions to the level of the lowest common denominator.

DECISIVE ACTION

The International has responded to these challenges. Many of the programs started since 1991 will not begin to show results for several years. If we had not acted decisively, the union's decline would have accelerated.

The budget approved at the last Convention was not feasible with the loss of 3,000 dues-paying members since 1991. We were forced to balance the budget through sacrifices at the International, on the mainland and in Hawaii. Still, we managed to increase our reserves.

At the same time cuts were made, the officers squeezed something out of existing funds for organizing, international delegations, political action and corporate campaigns.

ORGANIZING

The new officers inherited a badly depleted organizing program on the mainland, whose staff had been cut in half, and began the process of rebuilding it. The staff that was left in each region has done a good job against the odds, but we must do better.

We've initiated several changes to improve our organizing program, but the experience of other unions shows it takes years of dedication to produce a successful program.

There are many longshore caucuses where members vigorously exercised their rights in the democratic process to advance the programs of the division.