UNION DEMOCRACY IN ACTION: At longshore caucus, Local 10 delegates split their vote; Coast Committeeman Glen Ramiskey speaks up, flanked by Caucus Secretary Tom Harrison and Chairman George Romero

Longshore Division Tackles Challenges Head On

Rocking the boat at SFHQ

SAN FRANCISCO—As we go to press, delegates to the ILWU Longshore Division Caucus are holding meetings in their respective locals to inform the rank-and-file about priorities set for upcoming coast-wide contract negotiations. By the time talks start in mid-May, it will have been a long and bumpy road to the bargaining table.

Longshore caucuses aren't known to be a walk through a rose garden, and the two held in January and February were particularly thorny. Delegates debated everything from internal "housekeeping" methods to major jurisdictional challenges, listened to seemingly endless speechifying, treaded the turbulent waters of competing interests, and, inevitably, did what they always do: wrap up business more or less on time—although, some would say, in spite of themselves.

As one observer pronounced, "It's union democracy bordering on anarchy, but it works."

POWER POLITICS

At the one-day "special" caucus in January, for instance, a major topic of debate was whether the meeting itself was even necessary; the contract caucus was due to convene just four weeks later. But with a push from the 3,000-member longshore Local 13 in Wilmington—the Division's largest—other locals large and small joined the call.

Rules don't require locals to state the reason for a special caucus, and a phone survey conducted by the Division's Coast Labor Relations Committee failed to reveal one. But once convened by ILWU International President Brian McWilliams, the January "mystery caucus," as he dubbed it, was rife with issues—and controversy.

The usual preliminaries were readily disposed of. McWilliams urged unity for the looming contract talks. Caucus delegates elected George Romero (longshore Local 10, San Francisco) as Caucus Chair and Tom Harrison (marine clerks Local 63, Wilmington) as Caucus Secretary. John Espinoza, Sr. (Local 13) was Sergeant-at-Arms. Cleophas Williams (Local 10, retired) was appointed Parliamentarian.

HOT & HOTTER

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As the 21st Century edges closer, ILWU members are constantly reminded how critical a role Pacific Rim trade will play in the global economy. And they are also reminded that they must be ever vigilant to prevent the mighty economic machine from steamrolling over union members and their families.

ALL-OUT FIGHT

ILWU Longshore Division members at the Port of Los Angeles are confronted with just that in a major dispute involving the port's new Los Angeles Export Terminal (LAXT), a coal facility slated to open next year. An unprecedented public-private partnership, LAXT will employ several dozen workers. But only the dockside work, LAXT executives insist, will be done by the ILWU. The "backslands" operation, where coal will be unloaded from trains for transfer to ships docked barely a mile away, will be handled by a nonunion company that (1) has a record of union-busting and (2) is clearly opposed to the ILWU.

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IBU Fights Bay Ferry Merger

By Brian Wiles-Heape

SAN FRANCISCO—Despite assurances they’d keep their jobs, sixty members of the ILWU’s local 63, which handles containers on the Port of Los Angeles, say they will fire all Red & White employees, except General Manager Al Zurawski. As The Dispatcher went to press, it was learned that Crowley Maritime is planning to pull its tugs out of San Francisco Bay.

In early January, in fact, Long Beach City Councilman Rudy Leon, Local 63 President Jim Spinosa, and ILWU President Tom Kuvakas voiced the concerns of labor at the Port of Los Angeles. "The heat is really on to hold the line," said Spinosa.

The union requested a public hearing at the Port Commission and the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to present evidence and arguments against the merger. "The ILWU International, have taken that fight from the heart of the harbor to the corridors of power in the federal government," said Long Beach Mayor Richard McWilliams, Ponce de Leon, Local 63 President Jim Spinosa, and ILWU President Tom Kuvakas. The union has been scheduled.

Not only does Blue & Gold not intend to honor the IBU’s existing contract, but its management also seems intent on busting the union and dictating to workers what union will represent them. "Red & White employees have given preference for the jobs, but we have a contract with another union. It is as simple as that," said Al Zurawski of the International Longshoremen’s Union in San Francisco, California.

The IBU has filed a protest with the Public Utilities Commission, which has jurisdiction over the merger. "It is our hope to make the IBU contract, he points out, calls for wages and benefits and seniority rights. The IBU contract, which effectively adds a half-hour to the crew’s workday, allows Red & White workers to apply for jobs, but with no guarantee the jobs will be theirs. Not only does Blue & Gold not intend to honor the IBU’s existing contract, but its management also seems intent on busting the union and dictating to workers what union will represent them. "Red & White employees have given preference for the jobs, but we have a contract with another union. It is as simple as that," said Al Zurawski of the International Longshoremen’s Union in San Francisco, California.

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In preparation, IBU representatives last May met with Blue & Gold General Manager Roger Murphy, who assured them that their members at Red & White, mainly deckhands, ticket sellers and liquor clerks, would honor the existing IBU contract. Present at the meeting were President John Smolin, of the Smolin Scholarships, and𬶭

By Brian Wiles-Heape

Local 10 kids should apply now for Smolin Scholarships

Trustees of the Victor Smolin Scholarship Fund are prepared to accept applications for scholarships for the academic year 1996-97. Now is the time to apply for the Smolin Scholarships.

The union ‘flexed its muscle’ for the Local 10 kids who desired the opportunity to go to college where he or she has been accepted.

"As The Dispatcher went to press, it was learned that Crowley Maritime is planning to pull its tugs out of San Francisco Bay."
The strike was declared 'illegal', and in fastly resisted the "buyout." Today by the government's anti-labor rules, the last bastion of waterfront labor in the employers, the press—because of lionaires. By 1989, the National Dock rank-and-filers are openly upset at the enents—the government and its police, being used as scabs in an effort to break towards the dockers, when (unable to stop the scabs by other methods) they against any trend had begun! PRIVATELY AND CIVILIZED The dispute goes back to the early 1980s when the Conservative Thatcher government began privatizing the docks. Dogged by scandal, the privatization of several ports meant selling them for less than their market value to former managers who are now millionaires. As port after port was privatized, a fierce battle raged in Liverpool, where dockers had steadfastly resisted the "buyout." Today countless millions of tons of cargo are loaded and unloaded, and the terminals are protected by police, being prepared for another shift after the last shift in 24 hours, and the Coast Committee to work out other problems.

GIVE AND TAKE

The Liverpool longshoremen have a record second to none when it comes to getting the best contract for their families. They've stopped ships from Chile in protest against the military dictatorship's reign of terror; demanded full-time, safe work for dockers in colonial Namibia; and supported critical strikes in Britain, like the miners and steelworkers. ILWU International President Brian McWilliams sent financial aid to the striking dockers in Welshpool, AZ, and called on all ILWU members to support striking dockers in Britain.

The two-week contract caucus convened on February 26 was far more substantive. Delegates sorted through over 300 resolutions on contract proposals; separating the wheat from the chaff, the debate, as usual, was vigorous, at times contentious and bruising, but the Divi- sion, its officers and delegates survived intact, although undeniably drained. The opening salvo was fired when recently-elected ILWU delegates attempted to challenge the seating of Local's "late coming" delegation. In dispute for months, the Local's elections were either withdrawn or referred, a sole survivor, clarified in further correspondence. They've agreed to receive a copy of the Coast Committee's list of pending referrals.

When the Illusory Project, the rest of the day-long debate allowed the Coast Committee to respond to several key proposals, which could not have been done at the 1990 ILWU International Vice President Richard Austin: "by just picking up the phone," the delegate said.

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ILWU crashes bash for U.S. Trade Rep. Mickey Kantor

Despite efforts by Port of Long Beach officials to exclude them, ILWU Longshore Division officers in Southern California recently 'crashed' a bash for U.S. Trade Representative Mickey Kantor held at 1:00 p.m., the march will be followed by a rally. Speakers will include Mayor Willie Brown and labor and women's rights leaders. The ILWU has endorsed the march and rally and urges a large turnout.

Major organizations, including the National Organization for Women, the NAACP, the Rainbow Coalition, the Third Baptist Church of San Francisco, the Vanguard Foundation and a long list of trade union organizations—such as the ILWU's position on NAFTA," and said he would wear it proudly. We hope so!

ILWU longshore Local 13 Legislative Rep Kevin Schroeder met with U.S. Trade Ambassador Mickey Kantor. Also at the meeting were Coast Commissioner Richard Ono, Local 13 President Ponce de Leon. Local 63 President Jim Spinos and Local 94 President George Konrads.

March to Fight the Right

On Sunday, April 14, workers, progressives, people of color, women's organizations and community activists plan to march in the streets of San Francisco to speak out for social and economic justice, and to support affirmative action and reproductive rights.

Following are the endorsements of the ILWU Northern California District Council and local legislative committees for the Tuesday, March 26, 1996 elections.

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