Let the games begin!

ILWU International President Brian McWilliams presents union proposals to PMA on opening day of coast longshore negotiations, May 15. No news may be good news. Next report when tentative agreement is reached.

In this issue ... 
- IEB meets & greets & heats up while it's at it 
- Coastwise, The Series: Part II, Thicker Than Water 
- It's the economy, stupid? It's the stupid economists! 
- Mexico: What happens when a government sells out its workers 
- ILWU Oral History Project Salutes Asian Pacific Heritage Month 

Plus ... 
Letters, Old Timers Corner, Vocal Locals and More 

And ... 
Notices the government makes us print, so there! (see pages 11 and 12—or else) 

CONGRESS PASSES THE TEAM ACT... 

You snooze, you lose! 
Don't miss our Washington Report and Legislative Alert.
Organizing, politics top the agenda at April IEB meeting

SAN FRANCISCO—With organizing the first topic of the ILWU International Executive Board meeting held here April 11-12, there was no room for doubt about what the ILWU International Officers consider a top priority.

Following updates from Interna-
tional Officers Rich Austin and Leonard Hoshijo, the Board held a free-wheeling discussion about the direction and progress of the ILWU’s Organizing Program since ILWU rack-and-fliers voted for the “2-4-24” organizing assessment a year ago.

While the program has had a num-
ber of key successes, hiring qualified organizers is a major challenge. The ILWU isn’t the only union looking to shore up its ranks. With union-led efforts to extend organize unions across the nation, aided by all-out push from the “new and improved AFL-CIO,” good candidates are a hot commodity and, unfortunately, in short supply.

For several weeks now, the ILWU National Organizing Committee (com-
pried of all ILWU Interna-
tional Officers) has been on an intensive search to fill two vacant positions in the Pacific Northwest. Announcements went out to ILWU Lo-
cals and ILWU affiliates in the Puget Sound and Columbia River areas, to several na-
tional labor publica-
tions, and to national Organizational Al-
liance, but so far there have been no suitable candidates.

HELP WANTED

Interim Secretary-Treasurer Joe Ibarra explained the difficulties of our priority is to hire someone who can handle the job right away. We need a lead organizer who can supervise and train less experi-
enced organizers, local officers and volunteers. People of this caliber are difficult to find.

Hoshijo elaborated: “We are ready to take a bit of a forward. We should keep that in perspective. We have only had the financial capacity to hire new people for the past couple of months, and we are actively search-
ing. This is a rebuilding process. We are at the point now where we can much more than double our organizing ca-
pacity.”

But as Austin noted, “No matter how many organizers we put on the payroll, local involvement is needed for the program to work.”

The union’s Northern California area has apparently fared better than the Northwest. Ibarra introduced new organizer Rene Monchatre to the Board. Working out of ILWU headquarters in San Francisco, Monchatre will be assisting other areas as well.

Labor’s political agenda was anoth-
er priority, especially by discussion of the “2-4-24” organizing>false

Another school of thought was that the “House of Labor” should unite be-
hind one presidential candidate, and that it would have been better if the ILWU had abstained.

But the Officers also questioned whether Clinton “deserves an un-
precedented early endorsement from organized labor.”

C H A N T O N  B A C K P E D D E S K

The President “pulled out all the stops to push NAFTA and GATT, over the strenuous objections of the entire

ILWU at the AFL-CIO Special Con-
vention, called to approve an aggres-
sive political education program and to consider early endorsement of
President Clinton’s bid for reelection. Not only did the ILWU vote “no” on the endorsement, “we were the only union that spoke against it on the Convention floor,” Ibarra said.

As reported in last month’s edition of The Dispatcher, Ibarra sent a letter to all ILWU affiliates citing the several rea-
sons why the Titled Officers op-
posed the endorsement. First and for most, it is the prerogative of the ILWU International Executive Board, which, at the time of the Convention, had not yet considered the matter. But the Officers also questioned whether Clinton “deserves an un-
precedented early endorsement from organized labor.”

WASHINGTON, D.C.—ILWU sugar workers in Hawaii can breathe a little easier now that Congress has passed a new bill that maintains federal support of sugar prices supports at least for the next seven years. The legislation, which is vital to the survival of Hawaii’s remaining sugar producers.

Unlike other farm programs which give di-
gret subsidies to farmers, the sugar pro-
gram operates at no cost to the federal government. Instead, sugar prices are maintained at levels high enough to cover the costs

import cheap foreign sugar and were not

protected from foreign sugar. Hawaii’s Congressional delegation, Daniel Inouye, Daniel Akaka, Patsy Mink, and Neil

The big industrial users wanted to

close loopholes that let union-busting raters, Republicans or Independents


For information about the SFSU Labor Archives and political affairs.

The awards are presented to individuals and are organized in groups that don’t have to be more to further the purpose of the archives. Other honorees are: Henry F. An-
derson, Peter Drucker, and John J. Grunh, Roy Hoffman, Theodor Schmid and David Cal. Faculty Asst., Alameda Labor Council, Con-
tract Costa Labor Council, Friends of the J. Paul Leonard Library

Before he retired, Watson served as ILWU Northern California Legislative Representative. He remains active in his retirement with the union, community and political affairs.

For information about the SPFU Labor Archives Awards, call (415) 564-8910.

ILWU/PMa benefit plans announcements

SAN FRANCISCO—The ILWU and PMa have agreed to provide the new two new benefit programs that will be effective July 1, 1996. Under the “Non-Choice Port Plan,” oxygen will be covered in full if prescribed by a physician as medically necessary. Under the “Choice Port Plan,” levels of oxygen will be covered for all participants, for one year at 100 percent up to $180 a month and to a maximum of $550 for the child’s first year.

Benefits information is available at the ILWU Longshore Division locals and the ILWU-PMa Benefit Plan Office in San Francisco.

Further, Hollis Greenwood is the Benefit Plans Executive Director as of May 1, 1996. She has served as Acting Director since November, 1994.

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One-time presidential candidate Senator Tom Harkin (center in jacket and turban-like sweater) joins in the laughter as ILWU members Norm Parks and John Toussaint,... oh, pro-

pose to each other? Whatever The breakfast trip across the bay on the historic Potomac

To all ILWU affiliates citing the sev-

eral reasons why the Titled Officers op-

posed the endorsement. First and for most, it is the prerogative of the ILWU International Executive Board, which, at the time of the Convention, had not yet considered the matter. But the Officers also questioned whether Clinton “deserves an un-
precedented early endorsement from organized labor.”

Watson and ILWU to be honored in June, ‘Labor History Month’

Local 34 retiree Don Watson and the ILWU will be honored June 12 by the San Fran-
cisco State University Labor Archives at a special awards luncheon hosted by SPSU.

President Robert Corriigan.

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hind one presidential candidate, and that it would have been better if the ILWU had abstained.

But the Officers also questioned because I think it is im-
portant that we go on record with our positions,” Ibarra respond-
ed. “In addition, we thought we should have been against our traditions and history for the Titled Officers to decide to en-
dorse a presidential candidate inde-
pendent of FEL action.”

President McWilliams added, “We do not intend to give Clinton a blank check. We are not going to say, ‘We are behind you no matter what you do.’ Given his history, I cannot see how we could have voted any other way at the AFL-CIO. We need to let him know he has to pay atten-
tion to our concerns.”

Other Board members supported the Officers’ decision, agreeing that the union could not give its support without knowing Clinton’s labor plat-
form. Concluding the debate, the majority of the Board voted to table the motion to en-
dorse Clinton at the next IEB meeting.

The other program which the Special Convention had the support of the Officers. A special one-

year 15-cent assessment was ap-

proved; it was the ILWU AFL-CIO issue-based Organizing, Grassroots, and Political Program.

The ILWU’s share will be determined by the Interna-
tional, with no increase cost to the lo-
cals.

According to the AFL-CIO resolution, these funds would be “devoted to educa-
tion, training and mobilization to fight for the issues important to (our) members.”

It will be used to “create standing national convention, with the goal of recruiting and training at least 10,000 activists, to strengthen local unions, to educate central labor councils by providing in-
creased training, coordination and staff.”

Candidates will be judged, the reso-

lution said, “by their positions on is-

sues, but preferably they are Demo-
rats, Republicans or Independents and hold them accountable once we have elected them.”

LABOR PARTY CONVENTION

Labor’s voice will predominate at the founding convention of the Labor Party set for June 6-8 in Cleveland, Ohio.

This will be a working convention to develop a program and structure for how the Labor Party will work. We will send a rank-and-file dele-

tion as well as the Titled Officers and ILWU Legislative Representative Mary McWilliams, President McWilliams told the Board.

Published monthly except for a combined July/August issue, for $2.50 a year by the ILWU, 1188 Franklin St., San Francisco, CA 94109-6898. The Dispatcher welcomes typed, handwritten, or keyboarded letters, photos and other submissions to the above address. ILWU, 1996.
The IEB also endorsed the Patient Protection Act, a health care initiative on the California ballot sponsored by the Oil, Chemical & Atomic Workers (OCAW), the California Nurses Association (CNA) and Ralph Nader's Public Citizen. Legal counsel Bill Carder helped draft the language.

The ILWU again joined forces with OCAW and CNA in forming a coalition of small unions, including the United Electrical Workers and the United Farm Workers, with the purpose of influencing AFL-CIO policy in a progressive direction.

Some of the common issues identified by the unions are universal health care, fair tax policy, international solidarity, environmental justice, re-negotiating NAFTA with enforceable worker protections, and support for the new Labor Party. McWilliams said no action or final program would be endorsed without IEB approval.

The Officers also offered the IEB unanimously adopted a Statement of Policy reaffirming the ILWU’s long-standing opposition to the U.S. economic embargo against Cuba, and reaffirmed its longstanding opposition to any economic embargo against the island nation.

Further tightening of the U.S. economic embargo against Cuba only punishes the children of Cuban workers, their neighbors, and continues the effort to deprive Cuban workers of non-military necessities such as medical supplies and equipment.

By signing into law the Helms-Brown bill, which seeks to punish any nation or business that invests in or trades with Cuba, President Clinton has sowed the seeds of a war that is ready to take any economic embargo against the island nation.

The International Longshoremen's & Warehousemen's Union is firmly opposed to recent actions by the United States Government against the island of Cuba, and reaffirms its longstanding opposition to any economic embargo against the island nation.

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S
id Nau arrives at ILWU Inter-
national Headquarters with a
large and loving family. Born in
Lubbeck, Germany, in 1887. As a young man
he ran away from his homeland to es-
cape the military; he traveled to Eng-
land, Australia and, finally, to the
San Francisco waterfront. His family,
finding work and a new way of life
granted to America in 1865. He
found work and a new way of life
among its working class. Luckily,
Peter Henrick Frederick Nau immi-
grated to America in 1865. He
found work and a new way of life
among its working class. Luckily,
he is the quintessential “gentle-
man longshoreman”—the antithesis
of the boorish, ham-handed, blue-col-
lar lout so frequently depicted in
commercial media. It’s a whimsical notion, perhaps, to
hope that someday, the general public will recognize
time of working among its working class. Luckily,
ILWU members have. There is no
lack of sage advice, compelling histo-
ry and from tales carried from fa-
ther to son to son’s son and on. He is
proud of his roots; there’s no guessing
why. His antecedents are among that
revered laboring class whose hard
work and sacrifice laid the foundation for
what eventually became the
ILWU.

Great-grandfather Peter Henrick
Frederick Nau was born in Lubbeck,
Germany, in 1887. As a young man
he ran away from his homeland to es-
cape the military; he traveled to Eng-
land, Australia and, finally, to the
United States in 1885. Five years
later he became a citizen.

“When he came to San Francisco
he did waterfront work,” Sid says. “By
about 1896 he was working in the
longshore trade.

Sid’s father, Sidney J. Nau (Sid’s namesake), born 1872,
followed in his father’s footsteps. He worked on the waterfront.
Only until employers broke the riggers and steevedores
union in 1919. He got
work “running around the bay,” Sid
says, on ferry boats and tugs. He died
in 1906, leaving behind his son, Fred,
who carried the family name once
again back to the San Francisco wa-
terfront.

BORN FIGHTER

Born in 1903, Fred Sidney Nau was a
tough, dedicated and feisty long-
shoreman. “I still worked the
dock, to gang boss, to
boss.”

Sid died in 1989. “People ask me how old I was when I
became a union official,” he
would reply. “I don’t know,” he would say.

Fred Nau pat-
trolled the bay
during the 1943
strike. “It was
unbelievable,” he
said. “It was
frightening.”

COURTESY OF SID NAU

...to live in a nice house in a nice
neighborhood in a nice town,
earn a fair day’s wages for a fair day’s
work, and, above all, to provide a
decent standard of living and a secure
future for one’s family.

Family has always been and will
always be the heart of class strug-
gle—the inspiration and motivation
for every strike and picket line. When
the boss attacks the worker, he
attacks the worker’s family. And that,
his, has shown, is a big mistake.

No one knows more about “family
values” than the worker whose family
is threatened. No one knows more
about the value of a union contract
than the worker whose family relies
on it. Having reaped the benefits of
militant, progressive unionism, hav-
ing gained the special insights that
only a union household can provide,
ILWU families are in unique position
to give something back—their stories.

ILWU kids. We write about them
now and in the pages of The Dis-
patcher—the awards and scholar-
ships they earn, their plans for col-
lege, their career goals and the
love. One’s family, of course, and the clippings from their community
newspaper: a football hero, a prom
queen, a 4-H Club president, a
volunteer. As much as we’d like to, we
ever have the time or the space to
make use of it all.

And then along comes someone like
Dr. Ahsima Sumchai, the daughter of
the late George Porter (Local 34, San
Francisco)—someone who “gives
back” in truly extraordinary ways.

INTO AFRICA

Starting in 1985, Dr. Sumchai jour-
ned several times to the African na-
tion of Sudan, to help victims of the
bloody 20-year civil conflict between
the northern and southern parts of
the country. Five years later she was
calling upon the ILWU for help.
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works” noted the fire and other Local 34 clerks collected
606 letters of clothing and food to
the Local’s San Francisco, Oakland
and Stockton dispatch halls. With this
amount of donations, a Pan Am jet took off for Africa with
2-1/2 tons of badly needed provisions.

Fred Nau was the great-grandfather
dad Fred on the Liberty
Ships during his 30-year

career, he went from the
line to fight for the union that
forklifts turned violent. Fred gave
as good, if not better, than he got. His
bravery earned him the respect of his
coworkers who elected him their
gang boss in 1905.

KEEPING THE FAITH

But it was the fateful “Bloody
Thursday,” July 5, 1934, that truly
radicalized the young man from
Marin County. He watched in horror
in his pal Garry Bulcke as San
Francisco police gunned down strik-
er Nick Bordoise and Howard Sper-
ry. Fred helped lead every longshore
strike thereafter until he retired 30
years later. And even in retirement,
despite failing health—bad eyesight,
bad heart, and cancer—he kept faith
with the men who laid down their
lives: He honored them every year at
the San Francisco waterfront.

Brother Sid, meanwhile, plugged
away in the hold for 17 years. He
worked side-by-side with his dad on
the liberty ships Jeremiah and Bo-
man. “Years later, Father worked on
continuing to teach his children the
M&G Agreement,” Sid remem-
bers as he looks out the window in
the office of The Dispatcher, eyes
scanning the impressive San Francis-
cisco skyline, searching, it seems, for
a glimpse of the docks.

Just around the time his father re-
tired, Sid became a gang boss. By
1965, he was a walking boss at Cali-
foria Stevedoring. “I worked there
decades to come; and to Sid who
knows what he had and has still, and
how much it means to him and all the
people who worked for it and fought for
it how important it is so meaningful
it, from one generation to the next.
Who can blame him? Who can blame
any of them? More than any-
other, they understand in a very
personal sense what so many today
do not. That if it weren’t for their
courageous forebears, there might
not have been a union, and if not for
the union, there’d be little to no chance for simple, working-class peo-
ple to achieve the American Dream.

HEART AND HOME

American Dream: It’s a hackneyed
term, of course, but there’s no equiva-
 lent. In two simple words, we imme-
diate understand the goals, needs
and desires of average working
people: to live in a nice house in a
nice neighborhood in a nice town,
earn a fair day’s wages for a fair day’s
work, and, above all, to provide a
decent standard of living and a secure
future for one’s family.

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the late George Porter (Local 34, San
Francisco)—someone who “gives
back” in truly extraordinary ways.

A three-part series about longshore work, life,
death and taxes on America’s left coast
were highly visible in the special section set aside for the union at the spectacular celebration in Mandela's honor; the event filled the Oakland Coliseum. It was a proud and memorable day for the union: Mandela saluted the ILWU as the first to boycott apartheid South Africa.

**GOING BACK**

Working with the University of California Hospital and the San Francisco Department of Public Health, Dr. Sumchai went on to direct relief efforts for Ethiopia and Somalia. She has received numerous awards and recognition, including the Sojourner Truth Award, California State Legislature's "Woman of the Year," and honors from the National Organization for Women and the National Women's Political Caucus.

Compassion and empowerment are as elemental to Dr. Sumchai as water to earth. Her community, her world are better for it. One wonders: If there wasn't an ILWU, would her father have been able to provide the environment in which she blossomed into the strong, dynamic woman who has given so much to so many?

ILWU kids: It's a bit of a stretch to imagine: If someone hadn't fought, as elemental to Dr. Sumchai as water to earth. Her community, her world are better for it. One wonders: If there wasn't an ILWU, would her father have been able to provide the environment in which she blossomed into the strong, dynamic woman who has given so much to so many?

ILWU kids: It's a bit of a stretch to imagine: If someone hadn't fought, for Peggy, for Elena, for their children and grandchildren, for all the moms and dads and kids and families of the ILWU? And it wasn't only union members laying it on the line. Throughout the union's history, especially in those critical formative years, their spouses have been by their sides: walking picket lines, feeding strikers, helping their own and other ILWU families survive the bad times and celebrate the good.

Spouses organized, too, and formed the ILWU Auxiliaries. They expanded their mission from dockside picket lines into the heart of their communities. From churches to charity bazaars, from town halls to the halls of Congress, they are the ILWU's right hand and ambassadors of goodwill.

**BLOODLINES**

That which we know as "family" in the ILWU—indeed, in the entire labor movement—is all this and more. Union founders and fighters: our mothers and fathers. Active and retired members and their spouses; our brothers and sisters. Our children are their children, and their children ours. For thicker than water is more than the blood that flows between generations; thicker than water is the blood of those who never lived to see the fulfillment of their ultimate sacrifice. It binds us. It fortifies us. For whatever comes next.

**COASTWISE...**

"It's a term few know outside the ILWU Longshore Division where, for decades, it's meant "coast-wide." There's the coastwise contract and the members coastwise and so on. With this series, there's another definition: the wealth of knowledge and insight gained by ILWU members working in the maritime industry. Better than anyone else, they truly understand the value of their labor—to employ them, to care for their families, to contribute to the communities where they live."
By LINDSAY McLAUGHLIN  
ILWU Washington Representative

MAY DAY—By the time you read this, the Port of Seattle—CWA Local 10-2211 may have already voted to kill your port or to “whipsaw” wages and benefits of port workers and downsize the work force! This is the future you can expect if the Port of Seattle Reform Act becomes law.

Despite dire warnings from ILWU members and other ports, the American Association of Port Authorities, and small businesses, most Republican members voted in favor of the “Port Killer Bill,” H.R. 2149.

By a narrow margin, the U.S. House of Representatives adopted the Port Killer Bill after a pro-labor amendment offered by Rep. James Oberstar (D-MN) was defeated by an even narrower margin. Most insiders predict that the contentiousness of the House debate has effectively killed the bill, and that the Senate will adjourn before acting on it.

Write to your Senator and urge opposition to the Senate version of this pernicious anti-worker bill, S. 1356, at the following address:
Honorable Senator [Name]
U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510.

UNIONS SLANDERED

The House debate on H.R. 2149 degenerated into a vicious, slanderous attack on labor unions. House Republican Whip Tom DeLay (R-TX) and Rep. Howard Coble (R-NC) led the assault, even referring to unionists by name.

Anti-union signs—including signs attacking the ILWU—were allegedly brought to a Republican caucus room to motivate anti-labor activists to vote to kill our nation’s ports.

IDF was referred to as an attempt to assassinate the character of Rep. Oberstar, a true friend of the ILWU who chose to bypass pro-labor amendment on the House floor.

In a press conference later, Rep. Oberstar said he had never seen such a virulent attack on the character of a member of Congress.

They only wanted to win that vote,” said Oberstar, “and they set out to smash the opposition by any means necessary.” Rep. Oberstar should be thanked for his valiant effort in defense of a struggling part of organized labor.

During the debate, Rep. Shuster claimed that other maritime unions, including political-financial powerhouses like the Seafarers International Union and the American Maritime Officers, supported H.R. 2149. Rep. Oberstar had responded that he had called the SIU and AMO to check out the facts and was told directly that they do not support the bill.

H.R. 2149 was conceived in darkness in the back rooms of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee by transnational conglomerates, Sealand and NIT- League (an organization representing the largest companies in the world).

The bill would eviscerate the current maritime regulatory structure and, without public disclosure or public recourse, would allow large carriers and large shippers to discriminate against smaller ports in favor of super-hub ports.

The result: a cutthroat economic environment that will throw entire communities into chaos and drive down wages, benefits and the standard of living.

Widely used on the House floor was an article from World Wide Shipping in which John Clancey, President and CEO of SeaLand, predicted “the demise of the niche carrier, the feeder lines, and the north-south lines with no other links in the shipping chain.”

Obama had been responsive to the massive deregulation legislation as the controlling factor. Inadvertently, we helped save Crowley Maritime’s deep sea operation from extinction—if you believe the statement from Clancy. You should remind Crowley of that fact.

Some of you will remember former Federal Maritime Commissioner and Republican Congresswoman Helen Delich Bentley’s address to the Longshore Caucus last year. minced words, she unequivocally declared that the legislation would reduce the number of U.S. ports to as few as four. There are now over 100 public ports serving this country.

THE PORT KILLERS

A sizable number of Congressmen voted to kill their own ports or put tremendous pressure on the wages and benefits of port workers in their own districts! I don’t care how much pressure the Republican leadership put on them; they’re idiots for voting against the people of their own districts whose livelihoods depend in public ports!

Port killers in ILWU territory are:

California: Brian Bilbray, Port of Sacramento; Steve Horn, Port of Long Beach; Elton Gallegly, Port of Brawley; Bill Baker, Port of Oakland; Richard Pombo, Port of Stockton; Frank Riggs, Port of Eureka.

Oregon: Jim Bunn, Port of Portland.

Washington: Randy Tate, Port of Tacoma; Rick White, Washington State Ports.


Company unions brought to you by Demos and Dole

WASHINGTON, D.C.—As this is written, Senate Democrats have agreed to a filibuster on the so-called “TEAM Act” and a temporary repeal of the 4.5 cent gas tax enacted in 1993, in return for a clean, watered-down version of the same old bill. Senator Bob Dole sealed this agreement for the Republican Federalists to be concerned about is: Democratic Version would allow employers to select the employees who would authorize to bypass the current labor legislation as the control- ling factor. Inadvertently, we helped save Crowley Maritime’s deep sea operation from extinction—if you believe the statement from Clancy. You should remind Crowley of that fact.

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BERKELEY, CA—Over the past 20 years, the U.S. has “dismantled” its industrial structure, atomic attrition for spreading wealth out among the people, which goes far toward explaining the growing gap between rich Americans and everyone else in the country, according to six sociologists at the University of California at Berkeley.

“The current level of inequality is neither inevitable nor tied to talent; it is a matter of choice,” they conclude.

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“This current level of inequality is neither inevitable nor tied to talent; it is a matter of choice,” they conclude after a year of combining their expertise to expose the root causes of the disproportion.

This diagnosis of growing class inequality comes from a unique collaboration of six Berkeley sociology professors: Claude S. Fischer, Michael Hout, Martin Sánchez-Jankowski, Samuel R. Lucas, Ann Swidler, and Kim Voss.

The six worked for a year to synthesize their knowledge across broad academic fields including economic stratification, labor, education, poverty, race, and American social history. Their new book is entitled Inequality by Design: Cracking the Bell Curve Myth.

Their analysis traces the outlines of far-reaching changes in the balance of power between workers, corporations and communities that caused most Americans to share in expanding affluence.

It also provides a new perspective on why working people have lost so much ground since the 1970s — even while productivity has continued to rise — and offers some solutions.

Two of the structures that have been dismantled, according to these sociologists, are strong unions and the rootedness of corporations in given communities. Neither has been lost because of so-called “natural forces in the economy,” but because of political decisions, they say. The resulting imbalance, they argue, has led to an increasing concentration of wealth at the top.

“The United States is now more unequal than at any point in the last 75 years,” the six sociologists write. They demonstrate that class inequality is greater here than in any other industrialized nation because of recent corporate and political decisions.

Their research indicates that workers in other industrialized nations, which have also had to deal with the globalization of trade and new technologies, but only U.S. workers have lost so much ground. Only in the U.S. has the gap between the rich and everyone else become dramatically bigger.

The weakness of unions is a main reason for this inequality, the group writes. Direct union-busting policies and labor laws that discourage strikes, they maintain, lie at the heart of this weakness. They say a deliberate assault on unionization is responsible for the rapid loss of union jobs in the past 20 years.

The rate of unionization in the U.S. is extremely low compared to that of other industrialized countries, according to one of the six, labor historian and sociologist Kim Voss.

In Canada, for instance, 35 percent of the work force is unionized — more than double the U.S.’s 18 percent. Other countries all have higher rates than the United States: Japan’s rate is 27 percent; Germany’s, 34 percent; and Sweden’s, 85 percent.

In 1980, a quarter of America’s workers were in unions. Still lower compared to other nations’ rates, it was still strong enough to counterbalance the pull of employers and stockholders.

“It used to be that every time a CEO started to raise his own salary or stockholders’ dividends, a union man would be sitting in his office. As a result, every increase in productivity was rewarded by higher wages. That face-to-face confrontation doesn’t take place that much anymore,” said Michael Hout, director of UC’s Survey Research Center.

He said the link between wages and economic growth — which had risen together since the turn of the century was broken in the mid-70s.

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UNION BUSTING

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The weak-
Our delegation was sent to Mexico by the ILWU Longshore Division (ITF) seeking international support. We were not entirely surprised, then, to be met at the airport by a large group of union officials and members carrying a 10-foot-tall "ILWU" sign.

The attack on the union here preceded the privatization program by about two years. It started with a government media blitz early in 1991, which accused the four waterfront locations of failure to pay taxes, large-scale pilferage, and poor productivity—charges union leaders vehemently deny.

By May 15, a small army of federal tax accountants and auditors had seized all union financial records and frozen all assets. They said the union owed 2 million pesos, which quickly increased to 8.8 million and finally to 12 million. A twelve-member union committee went to Mexico City for meetings with the government, but apparently their efforts to resolve the matter were fruitless.

ARMY TAKES OVER

On or about June 1, 1991, the Mexican army took over the port, physically removing the union and its members from their jobs. The Vera Cruz port strike united immediately and contacted the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) seeking international support.

In response, the ITF contacted the Mexican government. At the same time, the ILWU and the ILWU Longshore Division immediately sent one of their leaders to Vera Cruz, where we felt that workers were reluctant—even fearful—to talk to us. There's a common thread here: We repeatedly found that privatization has been used to reward supporters of Mexico's longtime ruling party, the PRI. For example, the engineering company now in charge of the container terminal also gets most of Mexico's river-construction contracts. They are not a maritime company, they know nothing about shipping, but apparently they've got the right connections.

COMPANY UNION

The new longshore work force survives on wages reduced by 50 to 75 percent. They have no health care or other benefits, and they are forced to join a company union.

We talked to a representative of an independent association of some 400 to 500 of these "replacement workers" with outstanding grievances against their employer. Many of these claims are two or three years old. The new "union" is encountering no representation or service whatsoever.

Port productivity has nose-dived. Two of the three operating companies are in the red. Meanwhile, waterfront accidents have skyrocketed. That experienced, productive, safety-conscious union work force has been replaced with inexperienced workers who have no union protection and no way of enforcing decent safety standards.

There has also been a very negative economic effect on the community. Union longshoremen were mostly local people who spent their earnings in town; their "replacements" are commuters who take their paychecks home.

Surprisingly, the old union has held together. There have been disputes between younger and older members about the severance package and the government takeover of the union's building to liquidate its "tax bill." But a large percentage of the membership continues to participate in union affairs and supports efforts to regain their jobs. The special meeting union officers called to introduce us was well-attended and upbeat. They have been very gracious on our conduct and support.

FINAL OPTION

While most members seem to have found other work, they have gone from relatively high-paying and secure longshore jobs to just scratching out a living. They have been faced with imprisonment, huge fines, the loss of their union building, and other reprisals. One of the greatest tragedies has been an epidemic of suicides: some 25 former longshore workers have taken their own lives, we were told, since the takeover.

The union has made repeated appeals for a meeting with Mexico President Salinas and his successor, Ovidio—to no avail. The union has filed a lawsuit as well, charging the Mexican government with violations of the Mexican constitution and other laws. They have also re-established their relationship with the ITF, which is again active on their behalf.

The Vera Cruz union knows they've made mistakes—underestimating the government was one of them. But perhaps their biggest "mistake" was that they have never been a part of or played ball with the political machines of the PRI, which might have at least saved their jurisdiction.

The union in Manzanillo is well situated to become a major West Coast port, and that their standard of living and power will increase as Manzanillo modernizes and grows.

Our delegation met with them, expressed support, and presented a donation.

BUSTED

The government's break up of the longshore union in Vera Cruz left many workers blackballed, unemployed, and broke. Wages went through the floor and accidents occurred through the roof. Above, the Vera Cruz longshoremen's delegation takes its case to the ILWU delegation at a special meeting.

JAILED

Local 13 member Ralph Espinosa outside the jail in Mexico City where leaders of the bus drivers' strike languished. The ILWU delegation met with them, expressed support, and presented a donation.

Privatization in MEXICO

A eyewitness account of what happens when a government sells out its workers

By JOE IBARRA

International Secretary-Treasurer

OSWALDO MENDOZA

Local 10, San Francisco

LEE BRAACH

Local 23, Tacoma

JOHN ESPINOZA

Local 13, Los Angeles

PRIVATIZATION IN MEXICO

JOHN ESPINOZA

Osvaldo Mendoza, local 10, San Francisco, was in Mexico recently on behalf of the ILWU to gain support for the workers who have lost their jobs due to privatization. Mendoza said the situation is similar to that of the ILWU's experience in Manzanillo, where the container terminal is now owned by a joint venture between Liners Mexicanas y Stevedore Services of America (SSA). The ILWU delegation met with the union leaders of the bus drivers' strike in Mexico City, where they were blackballed, unemployed, and broke. They were also in prison for several months.

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FOR THE LONG HAUL

We found a similar situation in the Port of Lazaro Cardenas. Understanding what happened in Vera Cruz, union members are happy to have kept their jobs and jurisdiction, even though they have suffered the same losses in wages, benefits and working conditions—including safety protections.

Union leadership here is very progressive, thoughtful and independent. They are in it for the long haul: The local has purchased lots outside of town and has acquired financing so that each union member can own a new home. They too feel that their port will become the primary industrial port on the West Coast, and they expect to regain the ground they have lost.

In the small, far-south port of Salina Cruz, we found a very different situation. A top union official here told us that his members were extremely pleased with the breakout. Under the old system, he said, they were paid according to tonnage. The new system pays a flat rate, and members have seen their incomes rise, at least for now. Like the other ports, safety is an issue.

But Salina Cruz was the one place where we felt that workers were reluctant—even fearful—to talk to us.
In the other cities, people couldn't tell us enough. Although everyone here was hospitable and friendly, we found a certain vagueness and remoteness. We heard that a member who raised safety issues at the union meeting we attended would be reprimanded.

Mexico City Bus Drivers

In Mexico City, the year-long bus drivers lockout is yet another example of the effects of privatization. The government's goal is to get rid of the union, SUTAUR-100. Its methods—sacking union leaders, blacklisting union members and imposing massive fines—are suspiciously similar to what happened in Vera Cruz.

Last year, the government broke up Mexico City's vast bus system into separate operations run by 27 private companies. As in Vera Cruz, franchises were handed out to political cronies, regardless of their knowledge or ability; and, indeed, they have been inept at best and criminal at worst.

STRAIGHT AND STRONG

SUTAUR is a particularly well-run and progressive organization and had always taken great pains to recruit members from all social backgrounds, to avoid favoritism and to assure good service to even the poorest neighbors. They clearly have strong community support. The membership is strong, too: 10,000 out of the 12,000 members remain active, and large crowds pack union meetings every Sunday.

Government authorities arrested and imprisoned a dozen of the union's leaders in April 1995 on trumped-up charges of corruption, and told them to provide the names of five family members who would be their only visitors. The unionists refused to play along. SUTAUR called a rally, and 10,000 bus drivers and their families surrounded the prison. This demonstration of solidarity convinced authorities to treat the union officers as political prisoners, allowing them an open-ended visitors list.

Meanwhile, from inside the prison, union leadership has tried to negotiate with the government. Talks stalled in the face of government insistence on excessive fines and a return of only five of the 27 districts to union jurisdiction, leaving only a fraction of the membership with jobs.

HARROWING AND MOVING

We visited the union leaders in prison, to see their conditions first-hand and to present them with a $5,000 check, authorized by the ILWU Longshore Division caucus. We found them in reasonably good shape, although suffering greatly from their long and unjustified imprisonment. Some of their guards constantly look for an excuse to create an ugly incident.

Our meeting with the incarcerated union leaders was both harrowing and moving. We were deeply impressed by their solidarity and strength, after nearly a year in prison and the prospect of many more. They were absolutely delighted with the ILWU's contribution, and asked us to convey their deepest gratitude.

The preceding was excerpted and edited from a longer report presented to the Longshore Division Caucus in March and the International Executive Board in April. For a complete copy, write to The Dispatcher (no phone calls please).
It didn’t take long to organize—workers car come up, you gonna see two haole guys coming out of one group a little more money, give them a raise to come to Church. They would wait until it was dark so the camp boss in the 1920s. Manlapit was framed and deported and the management figured, “Well, it’s time to bring in another ethnic group so the workers can’t unite.”

Plantation life was paternalistic, yet exploitive. We were money poor. Hunger was not the problem; Hawaii grows an abundance of food, and the growing season is all year around. So the plantation owners utilized that. They made the workers feed themselves, and gave them very little remuneration for their labor in the planting and harvesting of the sugar crop.

The sugar companies owned the plantation store, too. They would carry over the bill the following month, plantation system style. You couldn’t buy outside the plantation store; there was no other choice. Since they were related to the Big Five corporations of Hawaii that had total control of the island’s economic structure, the sugar companies brought in all outside supplies themselves from the mainland.

The employers still didn’t give up trying to bust the ILWU.

During the ’46 strike, we ate better than when my parents were working. We had a soup kitchen, all the ethnic groups would get together, there were reports from the various picket captains, there were hunting, fishing, and gardening committees, and it was a lust—for or kids, anyway. When I was growing up, the struggle became more intense. There’d been a long, bitter strike in 1946—which we won—but the employers still didn’t give up trying to bust the ILWU in the islands. This was when the McCarthy period was developing. The employers got to some people: The struggle for unity was still there: the employers tried to divide and destroy the leadership of the union and discredit the union movement by using communism and the red scare.

The school teachers then were mostly pro-employer. They’d say, “These guys are trying to teach the overthrow of the government.” I’d say, “That’s not the way I see it. All they’re trying to do is help the sugar workers help us. They haven’t said anything bad.” They’d answer, “You don’t know.” They’d just put you down.

An FBI guy came to the house to try to discourage the Filipinos away from Harry Bridges. He said, “This guy Bridges is a big communist.” My father’s response was classic. He said, “I don’t know what you talk about this communist. Me no go school, me no understand that. But now I got better pay, I have insurance. Is this communist?” Then give me some more.”

By 1948 I ventured out from the Big Island. I went to Oahu to live with my uncle, who was a longshoreman. In Honolulu I was influenced by the ILWU education department under Dave Thompson and Ah Quon McElrath. Ah Quon encouraged me to read. I spent hours at the ILWU library with the transcripts of the Harry Bridges hearings. I met Acme Band, who set up the library in Hawaii. These people answered my questions and opened my view politically. I got most of my education from that library.

I went back home to the Big Island after high school and worked on a sugar plantation during 1952-54. I started in the weedeaters’ gang, what we called the poison gang, and became a steward. I ended up becoming the herbicide mixer in the plant. The previous person died, and no one bid on the job. But I didn’t want to stay in the fields, so I was brought I led on the job and got it.

They used 2,4-D, a Dose Denominator. We had a lot of the old standard, arsenic, too. It came in wooden drums with no labels. No employer was telling you anything about this stuff then. But I knew that when I grew up, I would make like they were just having a poker game.

When my dad would get together with his friends in those days, they would talk about the oppressiveness of the employer—about some of the lunas, who were the strawbosses, the superintendents. And sugar work then was hard, backbreaking labor, with no mechanism. It was all done by hand cut. The men would say, “What are you going to do? You can’t swim back. You’re in the middle of the Pacific ocean!” These guys in fact were really held hostage.

“ILWU oral history project: From Division to Unity”

Abba Ramos Recalls Hawaii’s Early Days

Abba Ramos knew tough times as a kid in Hawaii. He fled the San Francisco general strike. His family was part of the San Francisco general strike. My dad was a sugar worker. My parents came from the Philippines in the 1920s as contract laborers. We were a family of ten. While growing up, the kids knew we were on a plantation.

The sugar companies owned the plantation store, too. They would carry over the bill the following month, plantation system style. You couldn’t buy outside the plantation store; there was no other choice. Since they were related to the Big Five corporations of Hawaii that had total control of the island’s economic structure, the sugar companies brought in all outside supplies themselves from the mainland.

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LETTERS

Thanks from Liverpool

We have just returned to Liverpool at the end of our successful tour of the West Coast of America and Canada. It was a joy to convey to the people at home the volume of goodwill, hospitality and support given to us by our fellow workers and members of the 500 families involved and on our own behalf personally, we wish to thank Sir John and Mary MacKenzie, who entertained us in their hearts for your assistance.

As a result of this tour, we know that little connection to the fact that we were from little lcomes we hope that our brief initial association will blossom into an In- ternational Friendship. May our friendship and co-operation for the benefit of the communities and the people of the world. We meet to help. We meet to help all of you, especially the less fortunate.

Sid & Harry

While re-reading past issues of The Dispatcher, I was struck by a passage that stood out to me. The article described a project in which the ILWU Local 36 was involved, and it mentioned the need for financial core members (FCMs) to participate in the financial committee.

Sidney J. Vrana

Notice to All Current and Future ILWU Members and Non-Members

This notice applies to all current and future members and non-members of the ILWU, or any local or division. It is issued to advise all members who happen at any time prior to July 1, 1997, to become financial core member, of their rights and privileges of membership. These rights and privileges can be exercised by any means, including suspension or expulsion from union membership are accorded only to union members in good standing.

The ILWU International Executive Board and the ILWU Coast Pro Rata Committee have adopted procedures for Financial Core Members Objecting To Nonchargeable Expenditures (hereinafter called the "Procedures"), said procedures can be obtained from the ILWU International Secretary-Treasurer at 1188 Franklin Street, San Francisco, CA 94109. Under the Procedures, a financial core member has the right to object to expenditures of his or her per capita and any Coast Pro Rata payments from the union from union membership for nonchargeable activities. In the event a financial core member perfectly such objections, he or she shall receive from the ILWU a written report from the Committee of any nonchargeable expenditures to total expenditures.

Under the Procedures, an objection by a financial core member must be made in writing and postmarked within 30 days from the date of the or the date of becoming a financial core member, whichever is later, and the written objection must comply with the written objection must comply with the rules of procedure contained in the ILWU International Executive Board.

The procedures are subject to change of articles at the discretion of the ILWU International Executive Board.

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The procedures are subject to change of articles at the discretion of the ILWU International Executive Board.
Hawaii Longshore caucus prepares for contract talks

HONOLULU—Union delegates from the ILWU longshore industry met in Honolulu on March 21 and 22 to put together a package of negotiation proposals, as labor contracts covering basic longshore and the longshore satellites approach their June 30 expiration.

The fifty delegates represent 1200 members in basic longshore, wharf clerks, maintenance, container freight station and bulk sugar.

Nale Lam and John Franks were elected as chair and secretary of the two-day caucus. Local 142 President Eusebio “Bo” Lapenia and International President Brian McWilliams were on hand. Traditionally, Hawaii longshoremen start talking with employers after the West Coast longshore bargaining concludes.

The day before the caucus, unit chairs met to lay some ground rules for the negotiations, based on lessons learned during the 1993 negotiations.

Lapenia recapped: (1) the union needs to go to the membership to get their understanding and support; (2) when negotiating over issues that affect the entire industry, the other unit representatives will be brought to the table; (3) the negotiating committee may consult with experts on legal matters, pensions and medical benefits; and (4) the union committee will take detailed minutes of the negotiations to minimize conflicting interpretations.

McWilliams reported on some of the highlights of the two-week ILWU West Coast Longshore Caucus. “We came out of the caucus unified and that’s the only way we’ll succeed against the employers,” he said. “If we think in terms of everyone in the whole industry, we’ll be fine. The key to success is for us to be solid, united, and have one program.”

The rally, combined with a 98 percent vote in favor of a strike, finally showed the company the foolishness of its ways. Panter declared, “We beat them because we stuck together and wouldn’t back down for anything. Let me tell you, our members were mad as hell.”

By JOHN J. BUKOSKEY
Regional Director, Alaska Local 200
ANCHORAGE—Longshore delegates assembled here April 19-22 to formulate demands for the upcoming Alaska longshore negotiations. Eighteen delegates were present from nine different ports. ILWU Coast Committeeman Richard “Ole” Olsen and representatives from Anchorage Longshoremen Independent Local 1 met in Honolulu on March 21 and 22.

The Alaska Longshore Agreement expires June 30. Delegates developed an extensive list of demands to be presented to the employers in mid-May. Serving on the negotiating committee will be John Bukoskey, Regional Director, John Bush, North-west Longshore Division leader and Chairman of the Division, Jay Browne, Southeast Longshore Division leader; Pete Danelski, At-Large; and Steve Harrison for the BHC ports.

Local 200 is currently in negotiations with the City of Unalaska (Dutch Harbor) over a first contract for twelve newly-organized members at the Parks, Culture and Recreation Department. Bargaining is also underway with the City of Unalaska/ Harbor for the Harbor Officers’ contract.

Local 200 is also working on new methods for capturing additional jurisdiction in remote areas of Alaska. In these far-flung ports, stevedore work is being conducted primarily by foreign crews. Local 200 is putting together a strategy whereby the foreign crews will be replaced by American longshoremen, and they’ll be working to implement the plan over the remaining months of 1996.

Important Notice on ILWU Political Action Fund

Delegates to the 23rd Triennial Convention of the ILWU, meeting in Seattle, Washington, June 3-7, 1995, amended Article X of the International Constitution to read:

"SECTION 2. The International shall establish a Political Action Fund which shall consist exclusive of voluntary contributions. The union shall not favor or discourage any member because of the amount of his/her contribution to the Political Action Fund. In no case will a member be required to pay more than his/her pro rata share of the union's collective bargaining expenses. Reports on the status of the fund and the uses to which the voluntary contributions of the members shall be made will be made to the International Executive Board. The voluntary contributions to the Political Action Fund shall be collected as follows:"

"One Dollar and Twenty Cents ($1.20) of each March and August's per capita payment to the International Union shall be diverted to the Political Action Fund where it will be used in connection with Federal, state and local elections. These deductions are suggestions only, and individual members are free to contribute more or less than that guideline suggests. The diverted funds will be contributed only on behalf of those members who have consented in writing not to contribute any portion of their per capita payment to be used for that purpose. The officers may suspend the March diversion if, in their judgment, the financial condition of the International warrants such a suspension."

"For three consecutive months prior to each diversion each dues paying member of the union shall be advised of his/her right to withhold the One Dollar and Twenty Cents ($1.20) payment or any portion thereof; or to contribute an additional amount of up to $1.20."

"The diverted funds shall be contributed to the Political Action Fund. The diverted funds will be contributed only on behalf of those members who have consented in writing not to contribute any portion of their per capita payment to be used for that purpose."

"Members desiring to have any portion of their per capita payment diverted to the Political Action Fund, but wish to make political contributions directly to either the Political Action Fund or their local union, may do so in any amounts whenever they wish.

Hawaii longshoremen prepare to bargain. Their contract comes after west coast longshore negotiations conclude.