Privatization strikes the port just south of the U.S. — and ILWU — border

A special investigative report for The Dispatcher

Story and photos by DAVID BACON

ENSENADA—When a barge berths at the port of Ensenada to be loaded with containers, longshoremen mount to the top of each box in a cage lifted by a forklift. By hand they attach the hooks and cables connected to an old dockside crane, and carefully guide each container to its assigned location.

Men like Raul Peralta, the union delegate on a recent job, are skilled and experienced workers. Thanks to their abilities, the job is done safely and productively enough that container traffic is increasing here, at the Pacific Coast Mexican port closest to the U.S.

Yet Peralta and his co-workers face many obstacles. They have to baby the obsolete equipment, coaxing work from it. Barges, small container ships and cruise vessels all dock together at the multiple-use terminal, just inside the breakwater and across the harbor from shipyards and seafood restaurants. The city is tightly packed between water’s edge and desert mountains, offering little room for expansion. And only two-lane roads, and no railroad, link Ensenada to the industrial plants mushrooming on the border to the north.

But all that is about to change.

(continued on page 6)
Mediacopy workers will have to wait a little longer for union representation and justice on the job. With intimidation, threats and ballot challenges, the videotape duplicating company tipped the March 24 union representation election against ILWU warehouse Local 6. Labor law offers little protection against this sort of behavior, according to ILWU attorney Bob Romar. The union can only hope to turn after the election, then whade through the cumbersome National Labor Relations Board procedures to notify the results. "The process is stacked against us," Romar said.

Still, Local 6 officials are optimistic—and determined. "We're going to stay on top of this 150 percent," said Business Agent Roberto Fleite. Discontent among the poorly paid, mostly Latino workers at Mediacopy's three plants led the union to file for the election three months before it filed for the last election. A coalition of union activists, including many immigrants' rights groups, held weekly pickets at the plants. The company classified some who showed up for three months as temps to avoid paying benefits.

Mediacopy's Sun Landre plant became the site of the biggest INS workplace raid ever in Northern California. The migra snared almost 120 workers. Eighty were deported immediately, the rest handed off to a detention center to await hearings. The company and the union also disagreed substantially over who could cast ballots. The union had enough cards signed to sink the NLRB for an election.

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The company, meanwhile, was firing or reclassifying union supporters to keep them from voting March 24, according to Local 6 organizer Alfredo Flotte. Among those were some 40 people who joined one of the weekly pickets and were fired. Those fired immediately, then rehired during a temporary hiring freeze. When it was lifted, they were fired again. Durs was a modest effort, beset with delays, with more than usual. "We're going to get a good quantity of workers, then rehired through a temporary hiring freeze. The union had enough cards signed to ask the NLRB for an election.

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Persistence pays off at Rubber Stampede

By DAVID BACON

OAKLAND—After picketing for 16 weeks, through the holidays and January, the immigrant workers at Oakland’s Rubber Stampede factory finally made their point. ILWU warehouse Local 6 signed a contract with the company March 12. Strong labor and community support, plus the strikers’ own persistence, brought a victory organizers see as a signal of more union drives to come among the East Bay’s immigrant workers.

“I feel we won a good part of what we wanted,” said rank-and-file strike leader Santos Rueda, who has worked for six years as avalidator in the plant. “For me, the main thing is that we have a contract and a union. The company is going to respect us now at work, including respecting our seniority.”

Other workers are happy that the piece rate system has been eliminated, he added. The company’s decision to switch to piece rates last fall provoked the strike.

The four-year agreement between Rubber Stampede and union Local 6 calls for a 45c per hour raise immediately, 25c more in July, and 40c raises in each of the following years. The company is going to reduce the turnover of the workers, and the workers will no longer have to sign up for the “tall” and “stupid” stamps, stamp pads, and small rubber toys for children. Among its customers are Toys “R” Us, Wal-Mart and Disney, says Rubber Stampede owner Sam Katzen.

“Finally we made our point,” Katzen said. “For me, this is a win-win situation. We’ve got a vote with a reputable chairman who I respect, and I expect the union and the company are going to work together well.”

Local 6 narrowly lost an election at Rubber Stampede last April amid union allegations of employer intimida-

tion. But when the company was threatened with new piece rates in October, even workers who had voted against the union were ready to act. Piece rates would have brought a speed-up along with a hefty pay cut. The company didn’t have to do that, she said.

The contract also improved benefits. Single workers who used to pay $5 to participate in the company’s health plan will now get 100 percent employer-paid coverage. Family members can get coverage for $100 a month. Sick days are up to 10 after only two years instead of three previously.

“Finally we decided we had to get a union to help us put a stop to this,” said Patzkowski. “I told everybody we’ve already gotten a lot more benefits than before, we’re already benefiting from the union. When the workers had had enough and decided it was time to organize, Patzkowski called Chabot and got him to mail off a copy of Local 6’s contract.

Patzkowski then suggested to his co-workers that they meet on the weekend and look over the contract. Together in the meantime, through ILWU organizing channels, Chabot alerted the International organizers for Southern California, Mike Diller. Diller called Patzkowski the Friday before the workers’ scheduled Saturday meeting.

“Mike said he wanted to meet everybody,” Patzkowski said. “I told him ‘Rush it. Bring some pledge cards and ask them if they’re interested. ’”

Patzkowski said he got 100 people there. “I was very impressed by the size of the crowd,” he said. Patzkowski said he was very impressed by the size of the crowd.

“People saw the folks in Seattle have won,” Patzkowski said.

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The company had a big campaign to stop the union. Patzkowski, an anti-union attorney who was hired if a strike were to occur he would have had to make a decision to mediate an end to this dispute,” said Katzen. “For me, this is a win-win situation. We’ve got a vote with a reputable chairman who I respect, and I expect the union and the company are going to work together well.” Half the strikers returned to work March 24. The rest were due to go back by March 31, though some were fired.

Local 6 organizer Alfredo Flotte says he believes the union’s efforts to have 50 percent of its workforce sign up for the union brought the strike to a quick resolution.

“The company is going to reduce the turnover of the workers, and the workers will no longer have to sign up for the “tall” and “stupid” stamps, stamp pads, and small rubber toys for children. Among its customers are Toys “R” Us, Wal-Mart and Disney, says Rubber Stampede owner Sam Katzen.

“In Berlin, the September elections resulted in a power sharing agreement between the CDU and the FDP, creating a ‘grand coalition’ government led by the CDU’s Angela Merkel. The agreement included measures to reduce government spending, increase tax revenues, and limit immigration. Despite these measures, Germany continued to experience high levels of unemployment and economic instability.

In France, the Socialist Party’s Emmanuel Macron won the presidential election and formed a government with the support of the left-wing party, the French Communist Party. The government focused on economic reforms, including labor market reforms and the legalization of same-sex marriage.

In the United States, President Barack Obama entered his second term, and the Democratic Party maintained its majority in the House of Representatives. However, the Republicans controlled the Senate, leading to gridlock in Congress.

In the Middle East, the Syrian civil war continued, with the government forces facing opposition from various groups, including the Syrian opposition, Kurdish forces, and Islamic states like Iran and Saudi Arabia. The conflict led to the displacement of millions of people and resulted in a humanitarian crisis.

In Africa, the African Union faced challenges in addressing various conflicts, including the civil war in South Sudan and the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The organization continued to play a role in promoting peace and security on the continent.

In South America, Brazil faced economic challenges, leading to a recession and political instability. The government of President Dilma Rousseff was facing criticism for its handling of the economy and the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro.
The road to labor law reform

By LINDSAY McAULAHIN
ILWU Washington Representative

The first small returns on labor’s heavy investment in the Clinton-Gore campaign came in during the AFL-CIO’s convention in February. Vice President Gore told the leaders assembled in Los Angeles that the administration plans to issue new regulations that could significantly improve the standard of living for hundreds of thousands of workers whose employers bid for federal contracts.

The proposed changes in the implementation of the federal Procurement Act seek to protect workers’ rights and expedite the standards while improving federal government procurement and contracting practices.

One of the Administration proposals calls for a bidder’s “employment practices” to be considered along with the existing criteria for evaluating whether the company is a “responsible contractor”—whether it has the integrity, business ethics and capability to fulfill the contract. Contracting agencies would review bidders’ records of compliance with laws governing safety and health, wages and hours, equal employment opportunity and the right to organize and engage in collective bargaining.

The other procurement reform initiative would save taxpayers money and make real improvements. The rules would stop the government’s current practice of reimbursing contractors for money they spend running union-busting campaigns. It would also close a loophole that allows contractors to treat the cost of defending themselves against National Labor Relations Board complaints as a reimbursable “cost of doing business.”

The proposed procurement reforms are administrative changes that don’t require Congress’ approval. But they must be published for public review and comment, and Congress can affect them in other ways—by holding up appropriations needed to implement them, for example.

Big business is already jumping up and down and crying “fool.” General businesses want to remain non-union, and have found the National Labor Relations Act so full of holes that they are able to intimidate, coerce, and procrastinate until they bust the union. Big government contractors fear the procurement reforms will give them too little leverage to break the backs of their workers and still obtain lucrative government jobs.

We will be watching the progress of the initiatives closely, and must be prepared to fight off efforts by Congress and government agencies to narrow the scope of the new regulations. At the same time, we must not lose sight of the need to educate Congress on the necessity for comprehensive labor law reform that effectively protects workers’ rights to organize. The Workplace Democracy Act, sponsored by Rep. Bernie Sanders (I-VT), gives us one important tool for that education process. This comprehensive labor law reform legislation should be introduced in the next few weeks, and I will be asking District Councils to help get co-sponsors for it.

Briefly, the Workplace Democracy Act would make the following changes in the National Labor Relations Act:

- Extend NLRA coverage to workers whose employers bid for federal contracts.
- Require overtime after a 40-hour week instead of an eight-hour day.
- Give workers the right to file unfair labor practice complaints against the employer as it would if the union won an election.
- Guarantee the right to a first contract. If no collective bargaining agreement has been reached by 45 days after certification, the union would have the right to binding arbitration.
- Strengthen the NLRB’s enforcement authority. The Board would get the right to use its injunctive power whenever it finds an unfair labor practice. Workers wronged by ULP violations would have the right to compensation for economic losses, and unlawfully discharged employees would have to be reinstated immediately.
- Repeal prohibitions against strikes, boycotts and hot cargo agreements. Taft-Hartley provisions prohibiting sympathy strikes would be repealed. So would prohibitions on agreements between employers and a union to refrain from handling products of any other employer.
- Prohibit state “right-to-work” laws. All workers would enjoy the rights guaranteed them under federal law, regardless of where they live.

The struggle for major labor law reform will take a lot of hard work. We need to start educating Congress and the public on the nature and urgency of such reform, using initiatives like the Workplace Democracy Act.

The Workplace Democracy Act, if passed, would cover all workers, including those now covered by the NLRA, who are not covered by the Taft-Hartley Act, regardless of where they live. Unlike the NLRA, the Worksplace Democracy Act would cover both private employers and government contractors. The act would require employers to bargain with the bargaining agent (the National Labor Relations Board) “whenever it finds an unfair labor practice complaint, including cases brought by the employees themselves.” The act would also extend coverage to federal government contractors.

The Workplace Democracy Act is a first step towards creating a new bargaining relationship for the 1990s, a real worker’s democracy. The act is a statement that workers have the right to organize and bargain to lift wages and hours, equal employment opportunities, and promote fairness. This new rule would stop the government’s current practice of reimbursing contractors for money they spend running union-busting campaigns. It would also save the taxpayers money and make real improvements. The rules would stop the government’s current practice of reimbursing contractors for money they spend running union-busting campaigns.

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The Workplace Democracy Act would prohibit state “right-to-work” laws. All workers would enjoy the rights guaranteed them under federal law, regardless of where they live.

The Workplace Democracy Act would require state and federal governments to cease and desist from all efforts to exercise their authority under the NLRA or the laws and procedures of their own country.

- Establish card-check-off recognition. If a majority of workers sign cards choosing union representation, the employer would legally have to recognize the union—as it would if the union won an election.
- Guarantee the right to a first contract. If no collective bargaining agreement has been reached by 45 days after certification, the union would have the right to binding arbitration.
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ITF busts reflagged ship.

The crew of the MV Hellas pulls up the gangplank.

By TOM PRICE

I n olden times sailors, hunkered down in the dimly lit foc'sle of their ships, told the tale of the Flying Dutchman, a seaman bound to sail the seas for eternity. Before they organized, sailors often faced horrific working conditions, and many of them felt great affinity with the Dutchman. The recently reflagged Greek-owned Motor Vessel Hellas is one such vessel.

THE MOTOR VESSEL HELLAS

An urgent call from a taxi company routed ITF inspector Peter Lahay from his Vancouver Island home at 7 a.m. on January 18, 1997, informing him that two seafarers were en route to his office by the ferry Ro-Van, to the Victoria Terminal in Vancouver, British Columbia.

He began a story that is being repeated all along the coast and on the high seas. When Lahay arrived at his office, the Porte Canada Police were interviewing the sailors. The sailors complained of physical, mental, and drug abuse aboard the 139,000 DWT Motor Vessel Hellas, registered under the Greek flag of convenience. They claimed ship’s officers both used and pushed amphetamines on the Panamanian crew in order to increase productivity. Sailors charged the officers with physical abuse and failing to issue back pay, without which they were virtually prisoners aboard the Greek-owned ship. Many of the 16-person crew wanted repatriation. They wanted off the ship, with their pay.

The police were reluctant to pursue the alleged assault without further evidence. The customs did search the vessel for drugs, but found none. Any concern of the dockers for the sailors and management knew there was little to support for the sailors in the ILWU. The owners were given the figures around 11 p.m., and Lahay thought his workday was finally over.

Such would not be the case. Around 2 a.m. the agent called Lahay, asking if it would be a problem if a scab crew were to come aboard. Concerned that the owners planned an escape, Lahay told the agent in language clearly understood on the picket line, that such a move would surely start a war, and that it would be excellent television. The owners beat a hastly retreat.

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Ensenada pays by the day, at a rate only $25 per hour in wages alone.

The pay system changed as well. Before privatization, the union was paid by the ton of cargo handled. A day's labor during the 1980s, for instance, was worth as much as $2,500 pesos ($170 at the current rate of exchange, and twice that before the 1995 devaluation). Estibadores de Ensenada paid per day in the 1980s was only three times the minimum wage, about $15 per day.

Ensenada also suffered from the U.S. boycott of Mexican tuna, imposed in 1992 out of concern that dolphins were being caught in the tuna nets. Since the boycott began, the tuna port of Ensenada has consisted mostly of refrigerated boxes of seafood for export. When the boycott hit, the number of TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units) fell from 20,000 pesos ($3740) at the current rate of exchange, and twice that before the 1995 devaluation). Estibadores de Ensenada pays per day in the 1980s was only three times the minimum wage, about $15 per day.

Ensenada longshoremen hooking a container to the cables from a crane that will load it on a barge bound for Long Beach. The cage at right lifts men to the top of the container.
al enterprises were sold to private in-

vestors, at the cost of thousands of lay-
downs. U.S. companies were allowed to

sell off Mexican government assets, at 
the cost of thousands of layoffs. 

When Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo devalued the peso in January 1995, prices for grocers and basic ser-

vices started to climb steeply. Milk, for instance, was almost 40 percent higher in 1995 alone, and now costs 17.50, or 
two hours of work on the Ensenada

Road, per worker.

For workers, cheap prices meant that they could pay the same wages using only

half as many dollars. As a result, there's 
been a building boom all along the bor-
der, where 10 factories, employing an average of 1,000 workers each, opened each week during the first three months of 1996. In Tijuana alone, 11 new plants started operations in March. Some 900,000 maquiladora workers now pass through the doors of 2,000 bor-
der factories every day.

With production growing so rapidly, especially in the maquiladora fact-

ries that plant the plants and finished prod-

ucts out is becoming more and more of a prob-

lem. The north of Mexico is not connected to the country's rail network. 

That too, is about to change.

RAIL CONNECTIONS

According to Ensenada port director 

Medina, when Ensenada reaches a ca-

pacity of 70,000 TEUs per year, the gov-

ernment will open up bidding for the con-

struction of a rail link between the port and an existing line that runs along the border. 

That line, built long ago by Southern Pacific and the Spreckels sugar family, runs from the port of San Diego totally into Mexico. It crosses back into the U.S. in the Imperial Valley. It meets the existing trunk line in El Centro and Niland, heading east from there through the southwest to New Orleans.

Since 1976 San Diego's Metropolitan Transect Authority has owned the line. Mysterious fires simultaneously burned two tunnels and a trestle bridge in Carrizo Gorge link.

Repair work just started last year. When it is completed, companies will be able to unload containers in San Diego, put them on railroad cars and send them directly east, without having to move them north through Los Angeles. 

In the short term, that will mean in-

creased traffic in the port of San Diego, 
expecially when line improvements make room enough in the tunnels for dou-

tle-stacked containers.

A new line from Ensenada to Tecate, however, will change the flow of cargo substantially. In the short run, it will allow maquiladoras in Tijuana, Tecate and Mexicali to move containers directly onto ships in the port of Ense-

nada, without entering the U.S. That project is apparently of special inter-

est to Hyundai Corporation, which owns a big Tijuana plant that manufact-

ures shipping containers. Baja Cali-

fornia state authorities have already held discussions with the company about building the rail line, at a $100 million project.

Hyundai is not only interested in the construction and operation of the line itself, but in heavy industrial develop-

ment on the land next to it, including a possible auto assembly plant and basic steel making.

The Tecate/Ensenada railroad pro-

ject is part of a whole new transporta-

tion infrastructure being set up in cen-

tral Mexico, in cooperation with U.S. and other foreign shippers. It includes the Pacific Coast ports and developing in-

terminal links with railroads, which will allow longer-term logistics and eventually be privatized. This in turn will create new jobs for Mexico's growing industries, but those in the U.S. as well, as NAFTA has elimi-

nated much of the bureaucracy at the border.

INTERNATIONAL CAPITAL, INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

All this will have an impact on the 

bargaining leverage of U.S. longshore men. If a labor dispute were to close 

U.S. Pacific Coast ports, as in the 1971 strike, the grid would make shipment through Mexican ports much easier than circumventing U.S. ports was then.

That, in turn, makes relationships between Mexican and U.S. longshore workers and their unions more impor-

tant than ever. Only solidarity with Mexican unions, and eventual arrange-

ments for close cooperation, will be able to keep longshoremen from being 

whipped against each other across the border.

With that perspective in mind, a num-

ber of longer-term delegations have visited Mexican ports in the last five years, in-

cluding Veracruz and ports along the Pa-

ific. Longshore delegations have shown interest as well in finding out more about the political opposition, which has 
criticized the government's policies of encouraging foreign investment at the cost of declining incomes and working conditions. A delegation just returned from a trip to Ensenada to investigate the situation of the longshore union and plans for port expansion. (See story, page 9)

These recent efforts to develop ties 

exchanges like this more difficult, ILWU 

Washington D.C. legislative representa-

tive Lindsay McLaughlin thinks it might be possible to reinstitute them.

"We should work for provisions in any 

liberalized free trade agreement which would allow unions in different coun-

tries to cooperate and work together unimpeded by government interference, as is currently the case with the free flow of international capital," McLaugh-

lin said.

Recent developments in the Mexican labor movement also point to new possi-

bilities for international cooperation. Though prices have skyrocketed since 

NAFTA took effect, Fidel Velaquez, the 94-year old head of the Confederacion de Trabajadores Mexicanos (CTM), the old union federation closest to the govern-

ment, has refused to organize any 

protest. For two years, he's called off the traditional May Day march, fearing it 

would become a massive demonstration against government austerity policies.

But in 1996, despite his threats, 22 unions organized a massive march in 

Mexico City, which brought out over half a million workers. They then formed a new organization, El Foro de Sindicalis-

mo de la Nacion (the Forum for National Unions), to begin challenging the gov-

ernment's anti-worker policies, to de-

mocratize Mexican unions, and to fight 

twice the rate of inflation. An ILWU delegation, visiting earlier this year, 

ed that union's leaders in prison in 1996, and contributed $5000 to their defense.

"We hope a new kind of labor move-

ment will develop here which will be more intelligent and more innovative," said Jose Delgado, an activist in the Ti-

juna branch of the opposition Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). "Al-

ready, people are building independent organizations along the border, organizing allies with neighborhood groups, with farmers and teachers, and with people on the other side (in the U.S.) Neither of our governments has an answer to the demands of our people. We will find the answer for ourselves."

Thanks to Lewis Wright of Local 13 and Timmy Chavez of Local 29 for assis-
tance in preparing this report.
Guess not! Garment giant can’t gag its critics

Opponents of sweatshop conditions at Guess? Inc. can speak a little easier now: the garment giant dropped a libel and slander suit against UNITE (Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees), a former UNITE organizer, and Common Threads, a women’s group that supports garment workers organizing.

“They were trying to keep us from speaking the truth, and they couldn’t. We’re thrilled,” said Edna Benach of Common Threads.

The suit was just one in a pocketful of anti-union tactics the jeans manufacturer has pulled out during UNITE’s campaign to organize the company’s own factory as well as its 68-some contractors.

Federal Dept. of Labor investigations found five of the contractors guilty of wage and hour violations in the last year. Those who allegedly follow the law usually employ immigrant workers at close to minimum wage, often paid vacations, sick leave or other benefits.

“What was happening to workers and the frontiers of the hotel industry as a result of a lot of [new hotels] setting some of the Islands highest standards in wages and benefits. The super-luxury hotel set a record, the rough going at other hotels and so on.”

“People are working in work opportunity port status and they want to see other guys come down for work. We’re thriving, finally.” —SS

Grand Wailea Resort sets high standards

Wailea, Maui—Nine hundred ILWU members working at the most expensive hotel ever built in Hawaii will also be earning the highest wages in the hotel industry as a result of a new, negotiated, three-year contract.

The new agreement calls for a wage increase of 8.9 percent for all workers, both tipping and non-tipping, and an option to wage reopen in 1999 if another ILWU hotel negotiates a higher rate.

The super-luxury hotel set a record, which still stands, as the most expensive hotel ever built in Hawaii when it opened in 1999 at a construction cost of $1.5 billion. The hotel is also setting some of the Islands’ highest standards in wages and benefits.

“We got a good settlement, considering financial conditions. We saw the rough going at other hotels and so did management. Our pay stays high—cutting out the programs most likely to succeed. Many studies comparing the effectiveness of abstinence-only education with more comprehensive approaches have shown that more comprehensive education is more successful and effective, said Hauck. For example, 86 percent of sex education instructors teach abstinence is the best way to prevent STDs, but only one percent give it as the only alternative, according to a survey reported by Advocates for Youth.

Disney ducks stockholder protest

Some 850 Communications Work- ers with shares in the Walt Disney Co. joined the California Public Employment Retirement System, a progressive investment firms and religious groups in voting against outrageous executive pay packages, voted by Disney’s suppliers. At the company’s February 25 annual shareholder meetings they opposed a resolution providing cash bonuses for company executives, including $70 million in severance for former president Michael Ovitz. These resolutions passed, but another calling for stronger monitoring of suppliers who manufacture Disney products in such places as Haiti failed.

What does sex education have to do with welfare reform? “That’s the question of the year,” said Heather Hauck of the Coalition of Labor Union Women’s Reproductive Rights Project. But folded into the welfare reform law is an appropriation of $50 million per year for the next five years for an abstinence-only sex education initiative, to be administered through the Maternal and Child Health block grant program to the states.

Abstinence-only education emphasizes the social, psychological and health gains to be realized by abstaining from sexual activity, according to the program guidelines. It teaches that a monogamous relationship in the context of marriage is the expected standard of human sexual activity, and abstinence is the only certain way to avoid unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease. It explains how to reject sexual advances, and how alcohol and drugs make people more vulnerable to sexual advances.

“Not only do these guidelines target young women, but they also discriminate against different perspectives,” said Hauck. Only programs that focus exclusively on abstinence can be funded—cutting out the programs most likely to succeed. Many studies comparing the effectiveness of abstinence-only education with more comprehensive approaches have shown that more comprehensive education is more successful and effective, said Hauck. For example, 86 percent of sex education instructors teach abstinence is the best way to prevent STDs, but only one percent give it as the only alternative, according to a survey reported by Advocates for Youth.

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In other news...

More work, workers at Port of San Diego

The Port of San Diego got its first new registrants in 25 years when 16 new Class B longshoremen were registered in February, joining ILWU longshore Local 29.

“These new workers will provide us with greater coverage and experience in handling the growing needs of the Port,” said Timmy Chavez, president of Local 29.

Total cargo tonnage handled at the port increased by 34 percent in 1996 and cruise ships are expected to return in another year or so. This increase and the new registrants take the Port of San Diego out of the low-wage opportunity port status and open up the chances for other longshoremen to seek work there.

“It’s a welcome,” Chavez said. “We want to see other guys come down for a while. We’re already getting calls. We’re thriving, finally.” —SS
Border barrio fights NAFTA's bite

By DAVID BACON

The delegation was charged with investigating conditions for dockworkers on both sides of the border.

Headed by ILWU International Secretary-Treasurer Joe Ibarra, the delegation included Joe Cortez, president of Local 13, Joe Gasparov, secretary of the Border Workers Regional Support Committee. The delegation hosted a lunch meeting with officers of both longshore unions in the port of Ensenada. Cortez said that he had been a major shipper of tuna on the Pacific Coast.

"Ensenada longshoremen are optimistic that work will increase," Ibarra said. "They hope that eventually a right to work law will be passed." Cortez noted that a spokesperson for the U.S. Department of Labor had visited Ensenada.

The conference dealt with issues of trade to the city. Cortez said that he had been a major shipper of tuna on the Pacific Coast.

The conference dealt with issues of trade to the city. Cortez said that he had been a major shipper of tuna on the Pacific Coast.
LETTERS

Time for a new party?

Anyone who does not believe we need a grass-roots organized and controlled Labor Party just does not pay attention to the daily news. Take these stories:

Ivins once wrote: "The Texas legislature is taking the Texas people in a snare: there are no jobs! Molly Ivins once wrote: "The Texas legislature will soon convene, depriving many a village of its idiot". And if we elect don't even have sense enough to put the horse in front of the cart. A jobs program first, stupid! Decrease paying jobs will draw people off welfare without a training program. Doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand that.

A Seattle paper recently blew up the old but true story about how our bridges are falling apart and repairs are urgently needed. Thousands of workers need those bridges to get to work and back. But we have priorities here, you see! Top priority right now seems to be to use taxpayers' money to build sports stadiums so billionnaire owners can get richer by hiring millionaires to play games and charge taxpayers to get in and watch the games in the stadiums they paid to build. If you live in West Seattle and work downtown you may just have to swim.

At least our legislature was wise enough to put the Social Security and pension checks safe. Prices will not leap in the grocery store. Castro will not invade our shores. And we are saved from the catastrophic population explosion that would have followed! Can anyone honestly say same-sex marriages would take any skin off their noses? Who cares?

Clintom pulled the pin on the air-line pilots' strike. This should warm the hearts of the top leadership in the AFL-CIO. They could not wait to rush in with unconditional endorsements and campaign money to get the Honorable Top Canine elected—only to find he has now used their pants legs for a fire hydrant.

"Observe, my son," said an ancient philosopher, "with what ignorance we are governed."

Jerry Tyler Local 19 Everett, WA

Beat the devil

When union people do good deeds in their union or community it kicks the devil in the ass. If we band together and do good deeds we can beat the devil.

Some think the union will be great, with no devils in it to tear it apart, now that our too-few old timers have left the scene. Without them, our younger members will have to take the time to learn the history of our union's founding on their own.

I think we must take on the attitude of doing good deeds. The price our old timers paid was the ultimate in unionism—their lives. We owe them a debt which is to uphold the values they died for. My question for all members is "Is it to hard or to little to do for our fallen brothers?"

For example:

1) There are no more of the old timers who would give their lives to make it better for future union persons.

2) Could we ever get conditions as good as we have today?

3) To many of us have the "I got mine" attitude. "What can the union do for me?" never us. Most of us want the ILWU to become "ILWUMI."

4) We live like the fat cats, think like rich men and forget about the working class. There will always be more room at the bottom than the top. It takes a good base to give support.

Now go out and make it happen.

"An injury to one is an injury to all."

Dennis Sandoval

May is medical
dental choice month

Active and retired longshoremen and families in the San Francisco, Los Angeles and Portland/Vancouver ports, where members have a choice of medical plans, can change plans during the open enrollment period May 1 to May 31, 1997.

Medical Choice: The medical choice is between Kaiser Foundation Health Plan and Choice Port Plan for Southern California locals 13, 26, 29, 63 and 94, Northern California locals 10, 18, 34 (SF), 34 (Stockton), 54, 75 and 91; and Oregon-Columbia River locals 4, 8, 40, and 92.

In the Washington area the choice for locals 19, 25, 52, 97 and 98 are the Group Health Cooperative and the Choice Port Plan.

Local 75/watchmen will have a choice of plans effective July 1, 1997, under their July 1, 1996 contract.

North Bend/Couo Bay Local 12, Longview Local 21 and Astoria Local 50 will have a choice of plans effective July 1, 1997 under provisions of the July 1, 1993 contract. A notice explaining the change and a choice form for selection of the desired health plan is being mailed directly to members, widows and retirees with eligibility in these ports.


Information on the dental/medical plans, and forms to change plans, can be obtained at the locals and the ILWU-PMA Benefit Plans office. All enrollment cards must be submitted to the Benefit Plans office by May 31 in order for the change to be effective July 1.
I was just a kid when I first heard about Tony Rania. He was well-known and liked in our community of Waialua. Even before I met him, I knew he was somebody. In those days, it was rare for a Filipino plantation boy to go to a private school in town.

Tony had a kind of charisma that only a few possess. Maybe it was his oratorical skills, maybe it was his athleticism, maybe it was just his honest character. Whatever it was, Tony had it and he certainly was a leader.

Tony was born in the Philippines, but immigrated to Hawaii with his family when he was only 10 years old. After graduating from Waialua High School, he returned to the Philippines to work for Hawaiian Philippine Sugar Company. There he met his first wife, Edna, who bore him two beautiful daughters, Estrella and Lehua. When Liz was performing in the opera “Aida,” Tony made sure everyone knew about it.

During WWII he joined the Army and saw combat in the Philippines and the devastation it brought to the land of his birth. After the war Tony again returned to Hawaii and had a son, Al Mattos, as some of us knew him, grew up in Kaimuki and received a public education at Liholiho Elementary and at Kaimuki Intermediate and High School. It was in these old stomping grounds, running with the “9th Avenue Boys,” that he was discovered by the union over the years. Tony himself said, “It gives me satisfaction to have had Tony as a friend and brother. His prize was a paid trip to the ILWU International Convention on the mainland, where he received a commendation. Al was an organizing dynamo and people took notice. In 1958 Al made an unsuccessful bid for a State House seat. He made another discovery that would remain with him to the end—politics, his third great passion. Whether it was electoral politics or union politics, Al had a true gift for strategy and tactics, and he was meticulous in his planning and execution. In 1962 Al retired, the Local 142 Executive Committee commended Al for his “steadfast loyalty to the union over the years.” Tony himself said, “It gives me satisfaction to have had Tony as a friend and brother. He worked with Harry Bridges, Jack Hall, and many other legends who helped build the ILWU. Al lived, breathed, and bled “ILWU.” He was ready and willing to service his members seven days a week, 24 hours a day. He saved countless jobs over the years. His sense of duty was truly remarkable. Al also commanded respect from across the table by the employers. Employers knew his word was his bond, and that it was better to be his friend than his adversary. He was relentless. Although Al retired in 1988 after 26 years of full-time service, he continued to fight the good fight, and the present, always willing to share his experiences that built the union. He was tough, yet intelligent enough to pick and choose his fights, and charming enough to use gentler means of persuasion.

Al was the embodiment of integrity, loyalty, and honor—he was a fearless warrior ready to battle against all odds, for he knew his strength came from the workers. Al was a true champion of the working class.
"The ILWU Story"

... a brand-new book that unrolls the history of the union, from its origins to the present—complete with recollections from the men and women who built the union, in their own words—and dozens of rare photos of the union in action.

"We are the ILWU"

... a 30-minute color video introducing the principles and traditions of the ILWU... features active and retired members talking about what the union meant in their lives and what it needs to survive and thrive—along with film clips, historical photos and an original musical score.

Be the first in your local to take home a copy—clip and return the coupon below.

Please send me the following:

____ "The ILWU Story: Six Decades of Militant Unionism" Books @ $5.00
____ "We Are the ILWU" Videos @ $5.00

Total enclosed $__________

Please add $1.50 per book or video for orders sent outside the U.S.
Make all checks or money orders out to "ILWU." U.S. funds only.
Send this form with payment enclosed to:
ILWU Library—book and video sales
1188 Franklin Street, 4th floor
San Francisco, CA 94109

From Delano in 1966 to Watsonville in 1997
Farmworkers Fight for Fairness
BE A PART OF IT!

National Strawberry Workers March ▶ April 13, 1997 ▶ Watsonville, CA
9a.m.-11a.m.: assemble, Watsonville High School, Lincoln & Maple ◀ 11a.m.-1p.m.: March 1p.m.-2p.m.: rally featuring UFW President Arturo Rodriguez and AFL-CIO President John Sweeney

Without public pressure, strawberry workers will never win decent pay and conditions. Strawberry sales are booming, but workers haven't had a raise in 10 years. They still earn around $8,500 per year for 12-hour days of bending and stooping in the fields. They lack job security, medical care—and often clean bathrooms and drinking water near the fields as well.

Owners have responded to organizing efforts by firing workers, plowing fields under and closing up shop. To expose and end these abuses, the United Farm Workers joined forces with the national AFL-CIO in the Strawberry Workers Campaign. The Campaign has harnessed consumer power, getting individuals and store managers around the country to pledge support for fairness in the fields. And it is organizing the national march April 13.

Union activists and allies will be coming to Watsonville from all over the country—from as far as New York, Atlanta, Chicago and Milwaukee. JOIN THEM!

BUSES: From Northern California, call Alexis Gonzales at the San Francisco Central Labor Council, 415 440.4809 or 1.800.243.2079, ext. 25205. Many locals are renting buses—health workers, garment workers, Teamsters, flight attendants and more. The Labor Council still has buses available to rent at cost, and can help people connect with others in their area who want to go.
From Southern California, call Roman Pinal at the AFL-CIO, 213.381.5611 ext 17. Around 40 locals have already signed up to rent buses.

FOR MORE INFO: United Farm Workers march HC: 408.761.9979

Photo © Otto Hagel